



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



WEDNESDAY — 27 JUL 2022

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**Events, Opportunities**

HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Biden insists there is no recession</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/27/business/biden-recession-us-economy.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/27/business/biden-recession-us-economy.html</a>
GIST	<p>After a virtual meeting with <a href="#">tech manufacturing</a> executives on Monday, President Biden was asked about his latest economic headache: How worried should Americans be that the country might be in a recession? “We’re not going to be in a recession,” he replied.</p> <p>The president’s aides have spent much of the past several days making that case publicly, ahead of critical economic data set for release on Thursday that could, at least informally, <a href="#">signal the start of a recession</a> by a common shorthand definition.</p> <p>It is the latest chapter in a challenge that Mr. Biden has faced since taking office: trying, largely unsuccessfully, to persuade Americans that the economic recovery is stronger than people perceive.</p> <p>After more than a year of attempting to soothe consumer anxieties over soaring inflation, Biden administration officials have segued into a sustained public campaign to extinguish fears that the nation’s economy has dipped back into recession. Officials have leaned heavily on the <a href="#">strength of the job market</a> and referred frequently to the criteria used by the economic research committee that formally <a href="#">declares when recessions start and end</a>.</p> <p>The campaign has been complicated by the Federal Reserve, which has tried to slow the economy in seeking to wrestle inflation under control. On Wednesday, the Fed was expected to make another supersized interest rate increase, likely lifting rates by three quarters of a percentage point and raising the odds of a policy-induced downturn later this year.</p> <p>The administration’s arguments that the country was not currently in recession were supported by some economic indicators, by many forecasters and by the technical definitions of what constitutes a recession that are employed by the National Bureau of Economic Research’s business cycle dating committee.</p> <p>“Consumer spending remains solid, household balance sheets remain in good shape,” Brian Deese, the director of the National Economic Council, said at a White House briefing on Tuesday. The full scope of economic data, he said, was “not consistent with a recession.”</p> <p>But the fact that Mr. Biden and his aides have spent so much time fending off talk of a recession shows just how glum Americans have grown about the economy, and why it has been so hard for the administration to change their minds.</p> <p>To paraphrase an old political adage: If you’re explaining how recession calls are made, you’re losing. Mr. Biden has tried for more than a year to persuade Americans that the economy is strong and that inflation, which has been <a href="#">running at its fastest pace in 40 years</a>, will fade. He has emphasized rapid job creation and a falling unemployment rate, noting on Monday that it was down to 3.6 percent.</p> <p>Americans have not bought it. Consumer confidence has slumped as food, gasoline and other prices soared. Voter dissatisfaction with Mr. Biden’s economic stewardship has grown, as have attacks by Republicans, who have blamed the president’s policies for fueling inflation and eroding Americans’ purchasing power, just months before midterm elections that will determine whether Democrats continue to control Congress.</p> <p>About half of respondents in a <a href="#">June survey of Americans nationwide</a> conducted for The New York Times by the online research platform <a href="#">Momentive</a> said they believed the economy was already in a recession or a depression. Another quarter said the economy was “stagnating.” Republican responders were more pessimistic than Democrats, reflecting an ongoing partisan split in views of economic performance depending on who occupies the White House.</p> <p>But more than half of independent voters said the country’s economy was in a depression or recession, as did a third of Democrats.</p>

Administration officials frequently acknowledge the squeeze Americans have felt from rising prices, which have had the effect of reducing the typical worker's wages after adjusting for inflation. They have also expressed frustration that Mr. Biden had not gotten more credit for a rapid jobs rebound after he inherited an economy that had just began to climb out from the steep and swift pandemic recession of 2020.

Officials have pointed to continuing strong job growth as evidence that the U.S. was not in a downturn, along with an unemployment rate that is near a 50-year low, and note that [gas prices have now fallen](#) for six straight weeks.

Still, the Biden administration's insistence that the country is not in a recession may be drawing more attention to the dark possibilities currently hanging over the economy than the White House might otherwise like to see. Fox and CNN set records this week for on-air mentions of the word "recession" in the Biden presidency, and CNBC came close to reaching one as well. Taken together, those three cable networks have mentioned "recession" more times this month than in any month since 2009 except one, according to [data compiled by the GDELT Project](#).

And officials have been keenly aware that the U.S. economy could soon meet a commonly used shorthand for recession, if the Commerce Department reports on Thursday that the economy shrank for a second consecutive quarter this spring.

That definition is easy to understand and widely employed: A recession, it holds, is triggered when the economy contracts for two consecutive quarters. In the first quarter of this year, the U.S. economy shrank by 1.6 percent. Many forecasters expected Thursday's gross domestic product report would show further shrinkage in the second quarter, though some projected slightly positive growth instead.

Global trends have not helped the White House make its case. A [gloomy forecast from the International Monetary Fund](#) released on Tuesday said some indicators suggested that the United States was already in a "technical" recession, which the I.M.F. defines in the shorthand way — two consecutive quarters of negative growth. Forecasters warned of slowing growth across America, Europe and China, raising the chances of a global downturn.

The administration has tried to make the case that the shorthand recession definition does not fit the strange circumstances of the pandemic recovery in the U.S., especially given the strong labor market. "Both official determinations of recessions and economists' assessment of economic activity are based on a holistic look at the data — including the labor market, consumer and business spending, industrial production, and incomes," members of the White House Council of Economic Advisers [wrote last week](#).

Treasury Department officials [wrote this week](#) that "considerable evidence suggests that the economy is not currently in a recession." They pointed to a divergence in the measurement of economic growth by gross domestic product, which counts the value of goods and services produced in the economy, and an alternate measure called gross domestic income, which counts up wages, profits and investments. Gross domestic product shrank in the first quarter of the year, while gross domestic income expanded.

In some ways, there was no need — or ability — to settle the question anytime soon. The Commerce Department will revise its estimate of second-quarter growth at least twice after its initial reading on Thursday, and it could revise the first-quarter estimate in an annual update later this year. All those revisions could push the country in or out of the shorthand recession criteria multiple times. A couple tenths of a percentage point on an economic growth reading could tip the scales either way, but Americans would be hard-pressed to notice a difference in their daily lives from it.

Still, the distinction matters both politically and in practical terms. Spiraling economic pessimism has undercut Mr. Biden's approval ratings and contributed to Democrats' fears of losing at least one chamber of Congress in the midterm elections. Worry that the economy was entering a recession could potentially

	<p>cause consumers to pull back on spending or employers to scale back hiring. Just this week, <a href="#">Walmart slashed its profit forecasts</a> and reported high prices were affecting consumer choices at its stores.</p> <p>Mr. Biden tried to stir economic optimism on Tuesday, appearing virtually with executives from a <a href="#">Korean company, SK Group</a>, to announce \$22 billion in new investments in the United States. Mr. Biden said the investments were “further proof that America is open for business.”</p> <p>Perhaps the biggest political danger for Mr. Biden is that he ends up correct about the possibility of a recession in the moment, but wrong down the road. Even if the economy grew in the second quarter, it could fall into recession this summer or right before the midterms, especially if global oil prices spike again, a development <a href="#">administration officials were trying to head off</a>.</p> <p>The I.M.F. warned on Tuesday that the risks for the global economy were “overwhelmingly tilted to the downside.” It revised down its projections of growth in the United States, forecasting just 0.6 percent annual growth for the fourth quarter of 2023.</p> <p>Such a slowdown, I.M.F. officials wrote, “will make it increasingly challenging to avoid a recession” — no matter how you define the term.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Climate change outpaces planning models</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2022/07/27/climate-change-outpaces-fires-floods-drought/7708586001/">https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2022/07/27/climate-change-outpaces-fires-floods-drought/7708586001/</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. Forest Service team that arrived in the Santa Fe National Forest April 6 had a plan. They would set a small fire and burn away accumulated brush that might fuel a more destructive blaze. Such controlled burns are a key tool in minimizing the risk of raging wildfires, and the Forest Service reported success in 99.84% of its prescribed fires.</p> <p>But on this day, the team’s time-tested plans and near-perfect track record meant nothing.</p> <p>Years of drought and hot, windy conditions had sucked moisture from the trees, decaying pine needles and fallen limbs. Logs that typically would have been soaked with water from the previous winter’s snowpack or spring rains and runoff were drier than if they’d been through a wood kiln. Instead of helping to slow the spread of flames or moderate the fire’s temperature, they boosted its intensity.</p> <p>The fire set by the Forest Service that day escaped its containment lines and blew up into the largest wildfire in New Mexico history, covering <a href="#">341,000 acres</a> and burning hundreds of homes.</p> <p>An 80-page <a href="#">review</a> of the incident released in June found <a href="#">firefighters made multiple missteps</a>. A lack of up-to-date weather information contributed to more miscalculations. But one factor stood out: The team had underestimated the risk for the fire to burn out of control, a risk exacerbated by the area’s extended drought and hotter temperatures.</p> <p>“Climate change is leading to conditions on the ground we have never encountered,” Forest Service Chief Randy Moore wrote in the report’s foreword. “Fires are outpacing our models. ... We must learn from this event and ensure our decision-making processes, tools, and procedures reflect these changed conditions.”</p> <p>Scientists have been predicting wild and increasingly extreme weather fluctuations resulting from a warming planet for decades. But events like the New Mexico fire expose a widening gap between a new normal of extremes and a world that prepared for weather events using numbers from a static climate that no longer exists. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Across the country, the <a href="#">federal rainfall benchmarks</a> engineers and developers use to plan new roads and buildings are outdated, in some cases by decades, putting the U.S. at risk for more flooding.</li> <li>• In the Pacific Northwest, few would have believed temperatures could climb as high as 121 degrees in the perennially cool and rainy region — until it happened last year. <a href="#">Hundreds of people</a></li> </ul>

[died](#) in a heat dome event that struck the last week of June and brought some of the highest temperatures ever recorded there.

- In the West, warnings that drier times were coming haven't averted the problems caused by a record [22-year megadrought](#) that has threatened drinking water supplies for cities. Lakes are drying up, some crops are [failing](#) and many believe decades-old water allocation laws need to be renegotiated.

The problems are likely to get worse, experts say.

"There's a whole suite of examples where we have pretty sophisticated systems that have been designed and built around assumptions of an old climate," said Noah Diffenbaugh, a climate scientist at Stanford University. "We're getting further and further behind."

Updating models and projections to prepare for increasingly extreme events isn't easy, he added.

"I'm not saying the scientists haven't been listened to," he said. "It would be challenging to design a world that was resilient to climate change from scratch – and it's much more challenging to do it in the context of other competing priorities and a system built around assumptions of a stationary climate."

Using the most current numbers — especially when they are so often dire — isn't always the first choice of policymakers and state and federal agencies, said Kurt Schwabe, a professor of environmental economics and water allocation expert at the University of California, Riverside.

"It's often just kind of wishful thinking," Schwabe said, adding that when given a range of possible values, "they often choose a more optimistic one because they want to make things look better for their constituents."

That approach doesn't work when every day brings news of temperature records falling, fires raging, and rivers running dry.

"There are things that are happening around the planet that are worsening faster than climate scientists thought they would," said Jonathan Overpeck, a climate scientist and dean of the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability. "Managers are still coming to grips with the severity of it and how fast it's changing."

### **Outdated weather projections**

The changing climate isn't just outpacing fire models. USA TODAY documented the [increasing impacts of weather extremes](#) such as drought and rainfall in an investigation published in December. A month later, the newspaper reported that official [precipitation frequency estimates are outdated](#) in at least 18 states, some by as much as 50 years. And the estimates, some conducted on a state or regional basis, have never taken into account the increase in intense rainfall projected by climate change.

When Texas officials met with the National Weather Service in 2018 to update their decades-old benchmarks, they found that the likelihood of a 100-year storm — meaning there's a 1-in-100 chance of such a storm in any given year — had quadrupled in Houston.

The outdated figures leave much of the country vulnerable to more flooding.

"We have a broken national process for understanding and predicting the relationship between rainfall and frequency," Chad Berginnis, executive director of the Association of Floodplain Managers told USA TODAY in January.

A bill that would [require the National Weather Service to work out a more comprehensive way of doing rainfall estimates](#) and updating them more often passed the U.S. House in May with bipartisan support. No vote has occurred in the Senate.



People are already paying the price for living with outdated weather projections in the West. One example is water allocation from the Colorado River. A legal agreement among seven western states set water rights “in perpetuity” — written in 1922 and based on flows measured in the early 1900s, an exceptionally wet period.

“It’s never had that much water since, and it’s less and less, so they’re not going to have that much water again,” said Gerald Meehl, a senior scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research who was part of the team that won the Nobel Prize in 2007 for its work on climate change.

While nobody was giving much thought to climate change a hundred years ago, the failure to plan for the future has persisted through a [megadrought in the West that’s lasted more than two decades and is the region’s worst in 1,200 years](#).

“What we used to think of as normal is no longer normal,” said Jay Famiglietti, a hydrologist who directs the Global Institute for Water Security at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada. “Coming to grips with that and building our infrastructure accordingly is the problem.”

“The speed at which the severity of the drought increases, the pace of groundwater depletion, the pace at which ice is melting, these are all things that are changing much faster than we can keep up with” he said.

In the end, all the climate and weather models in the world won’t fix the problems we face, said Overpeck, the University of Michigan climate scientist. That will require the political will to both rapidly lower carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere to address the root cause of climate change and prepare for the different climate that’s heading our way.

“Really, what we should be doing is building and planning for the future,” he said. “The question is, what is that future? The problem with answering that isn’t our climate models, it’s our political system. We can’t predict what our leaders are going to do – or not do.”

### **Getting the right info to the right people**

Most government planning and infrastructure decisions are based on extrapolations of weather patterns. If a state has rainfall records going back 140 years, it calculates how often cloudbursts have happened during that time and assigns a likelihood that a real gully-washer will hit based upon that history.

But those estimates are based on the relatively stable climate the Earth has enjoyed for thousands of years. That stability is now gone. Over the past 6,000 years, the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has held steady at around 280 parts per million. That began to change during the Industrial Revolution, when humanity began burning enormous amounts of coal and oil, pumping ever larger amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. In June it hit [420](#). Such levels haven’t been seen in millions of years, since Earth was a hothouse, ocean-inundated planet.

Part of the problem, climate scientists concede, is that the weather fluctuations they began predicting decades ago were so extreme they could be ignored as unlikely by those making decisions on how to plan for the future.

Now that future has arrived, earlier than some expected, but that doesn’t always make it easier for people to accept what the new climate models say is coming, said Meehl with the National Center for Atmospheric Research.

“If you’re a forecaster, you have to start to think ‘We’re in a new world,’” he said. “When you start seeing records broken, that means you’re going into uncharted territory.”

For a time, even the scientists were conservative in how they interpreted the data.

Scientists run climate models thousands of times, watching the outputs change as they use different variables. Overall, the models are quite good, they say.

The models predicted more extreme events as the Earth warms and the weather grows more erratic. Those “spikes” show up more often, said Brett Anderson, a senior meteorologist with AccuWeather. “For 20 years now we’ve been told that drier areas are going to get drier and wetter areas are going to get wetter,” he said.

But in the past, weather modelers tended to average things out because that made for better forecasts. “But maybe we need to pay attention to those spikes and not rule them out any more,” Anderson said.

An example of such a spike was the heat dome that baked Oregon, Washington and Canada’s British Columbia in June 2021. Temperatures hit 108 in Seattle and 112 in Portland. An after-action report prepared for Oregon Gov. Kate Brown called the event “unprecedented.”

Yet while it was true that such temperatures hadn’t been reported there before, the models run by Meehl and colleagues had predicted such heat waves in the Pacific Northwest — in a paper published 18 years earlier.

The Oregon report noted the state emergency operations plan had contingencies in place for droughts, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, wildfires and terrorism — but not for excessive heat. Numerous recommendations were offered for better preparing the state for future heat waves, noting the events of that summer were not anomalies but indicators of what the state will face in the future.

“While efforts must continue to slow and stop the factors contributing to climate change, we must also develop immediate and long-term strategies to adapt to today’s changing climate,” the report stated.

Scientists are hoping to see more consideration for extreme events. Plans can no longer be made based on what’s happened in the past, because the future is going to be very, very different, said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles.

“We need to have greater imaginations when thinking about the hazards,” he said. “We need to be thinking about climate change everywhere all the time in the context of all the infrastructure we have, both existing and especially new.”

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HEADLINE	07/27 China warns against Pelosi Taiwan visit
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/07/27/Nancy-Pelosi-Taiwan-visit-military-warning/4191658911488/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/07/27/Nancy-Pelosi-Taiwan-visit-military-warning/4191658911488/</a>
GIST	<p>July 27 (UPI) -- Beijing's defense ministry has warned that the Chinese military would "never sit idly by" and take "strong measures" if U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi makes a rumored visit to Taiwan.</p> <p>The comments by ministry spokesman Colonel Tan Kefei, made during a press briefing on Tuesday, amounted to China's starkest threat yet over a contentious potential trip that has set relations between Washington and Beijing on edge.</p> <p>"If the U.S. insists on going its own way, the Chinese military will never sit idly by, and will take strong measures to thwart any external interference," Tan said.</p> <p>"China requires the U.S. to take concrete actions ... not to arrange for Pelosi to visit Taiwan."</p> <p>The California Democrat is planning a trip to the self-governing island next month, according to a report in the Financial Times last week. The possibility of a visit prompted a series of angry responses from Beijing's foreign ministry, but it wasn't until Tuesday that the military directly addressed the scenario.</p>

Pelosi has not confirmed the trip, which would be the first to Taiwan by a House speaker since Republican Newt Gingrich met then-President Lee Teng-hui in 1997. She had reportedly planned to visit in April during a scheduled Asia tour, but the trip was canceled after she tested positive for COVID-19.

U.S. President Joe Biden weighed in on the issue last week, saying that the U.S. military believes "it's not a good idea right now" for Pelosi to make the visit.

Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping are scheduled for a phone call on Thursday amid the worsening ties, Bloomberg reported.

A number of prominent Republicans have encouraged the Pelosi trip.

"Speaker Pelosi should go to Taiwan and President Biden should make it abundantly clear to Chairman Xi that there's not a damn thing the Chinese Communist Party can do about it," Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., said on Monday. "No more feebleness and self-deterrence."

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said during a news conference Tuesday that Pelosi would hand China "a victory of sorts" if she backed off on the visit after threats from Beijing.

China views the democratic island of 23 million as a wayward province and has vowed to retake it by force if necessary. Concerns over Beijing's plans for Taiwan have grown in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which is now in its sixth month.

China has also ratcheted up military provocations against Taiwan over the past several months, with frequent incursions into the island's Air Defense Identification Zone. Beijing also recently amplified sovereignty claims over the Taiwan Strait.

The United States has responded by staging joint naval exercises with allies in the region and sailing warships during freedom of navigation exercises. Last week, the guided missile destroyer USS Benfold transited the Taiwan Strait on its third crossing in a week of China-claimed international waters.

Taiwan also kicked off annual weeklong military exercises on Monday, which included air raid drills in the capital Taipei focused on a potential invasion by China.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Russia cuts Europe gas flows further</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/physical-flows-through-nord-stream-1-pipeline-dip-2022-07-27/">https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/physical-flows-through-nord-stream-1-pipeline-dip-2022-07-27/</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN/FRANKFURT, July 27 (Reuters) - Russia delivered less gas to Europe on Wednesday in a further escalation of an energy stand-off between Moscow and the European Union that will make it harder, and costlier, for the bloc to fill up storage ahead of the winter heating season.</p> <p>The cut in supplies, flagged by Gazprom (<a href="#">GAZP.MM</a>) earlier this week, has reduced the capacity of Nord Stream 1 pipeline - the major delivery route to Europe for Russian gas - to a mere fifth of its total capacity. Advertisement · Scroll to continue</p> <p>Nord Stream 1 accounts for around a third of all Russian gas exports to Europe.</p> <p>On Tuesday, EU countries approved a weakened emergency plan to curb gas demand after striking compromise deals to limit cuts for some countries, hoping lower consumption will ease the impact in case Moscow stops supplies altogether.</p> <p>The plan highlights fears that countries will be unable to meet goals to refill storage and keep their citizens warm during the winter months and that Europe's fragile economic growth may take another hit if gas will have to be rationed.</p>



Royal Bank of Canada analysts said the plan could help Europe get through the winter provided gas flows from Russia are at 20-50% capacity, but warned against "complacency in the market European politicians have now solved the issue of Russian gas dependence."

While Moscow has blamed various technical problems for the supply cuts, Brussels has accused Russia of using energy as a weapon to blackmail the bloc and retaliate for Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Gazprom was supplying as much gas to Europe as possible, adding that sanctions-driven technical issues with equipment were preventing it from exporting more.

#### 'SAVE GAS'

On Wednesday, physical flows via Nord Stream 1 tumbled to 14.4 million kilowatt hours per hour (kWh/h) between 1000-1100 GMT from around 28 million kWh/h a day earlier, already just 40% of normal capacity. The drop comes less than a week after the pipeline restarted following a scheduled 10-day maintenance period.

European politicians have repeatedly warned Russia could stop gas flows completely this winter, which would thrust Germany into recession and send prices for consumers and industry soaring even further.

The Dutch wholesale gas price for August, the European benchmark, jumped 9% to 205 euros per megawatt hour on Wednesday, up around 412% from a year ago.

German finance minister Christian Lindner said he was open to the use of nuclear power to avoid an electricity shortage.

Germany has said it could extend the life of its three remaining nuclear power plants, accounting for 6% of the country's overall power mix, in the face of a possible cut-off of Russian gas.

Klaus Mueller, head of Germany's network regulator, said the country could still avoid a gas shortage that would prompt its rationing.

Germany, Europe's top economy and its largest importer of Russian gas, has been particularly hit by supply cuts since mid-June, with its gas importer Uniper ([UN01.DE](#)) requiring a 15 billion euro (\$15.21 billion) state bailout as a result.

Uniper and Italy's Eni ([ENI.MI](#)) both said they received less gas from Gazprom than in recent days. Mueller issued another plea to households and industry to save gas and avoid rationing.

"The crucial thing is to save gas," Mueller said. "I would like to hear less complaints but reports (from industries saying) we as a sector are contributing to this," he told broadcaster Deutschlandfunk.

German industry groups, however, warned companies may have no choice but cut production to achieve bigger savings, pointing to slow approval for replacing natural gas with other, more polluting fuels.

Mercedes-Benz ([MBGn.DE](#)) chief executive Ola Kaellenius said a mixture of efficiency measures, increased electricity consumption, lowering temperatures in production facilities and switching to oil could lower gas use by up to 50% within the year, if necessary.

Germany is currently at Phase 2 of a three-stage emergency gas plan, with the final phase to kick in once rationing can no longer be avoided.

"If you asked me whether it (a gas shortage) is imminent, then I would say that if flows remain at 20% and if we can still add to storage facilities in the coming days and weeks, then we do not yet have a physical gas shortage, which would be the prerequisite for Phase 3," Mueller said.

HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Micronesia roiled by first Covid outbreak</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/26/micronesia-roiled-first-covid-19-outbreak-more-200/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/26/micronesia-roiled-first-covid-19-outbreak-more-200/</a>
GIST	<p>Micronesia is facing its first outbreak of COVID-19, with more than 2,000 new cases within a week.</p> <p>The island federation had previously avoided COVID-19 thanks to strict border controls and geographic isolation. It is the last nation with a population of over 100,000 to be drawn into the global pandemic.</p> <p>Health officials reported 140 new cases Monday, according to the Associated Press. Eight citizens have been hospitalized and one older man has died from the disease.</p> <p>Richard Clark, press secretary to Micronesia's President David Panuelo, said in a news release that "as of July 26 the nation has recorded 2,072 cases of COVID-19, of which 90% of positive results were identified beginning just four days prior," as reported by the Guam Daily Post.</p> <p>Authorities have responded forcefully, mandating masks everywhere with a \$1,000 fine for violators along with vaccinations for eligible citizens. Health officials say 75% of Micronesians over the age of five are vaccinated.</p> <p>The outbreak is currently contained in the two states of Pohnpei and Kosrae, with the two more populous states of Yap and Chuuk currently uninfected according to the Guam Daily Post.</p> <p>Specialized help from the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is scheduled to arrive later this week.</p> <p>The domestic Micronesian response to the outbreak is currently being hampered by the infection of much of Micronesia's government.</p> <p>Mr. Clark said in a news release that "In at least two FSM government departments, the bulk of senior officials ... are positive for COVID-19."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 China economic crisis deepens</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jul/27/china-property-sales-could-plunge-by-one-third-analysts-say-as-crisis-deepens">https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jul/27/china-property-sales-could-plunge-by-one-third-analysts-say-as-crisis-deepens</a>
GIST	<p>Property sales in <a href="#">China</a> could fall by one-third this year, spelling more trouble for the country's giant housing sector as people lose faith in the market and pressure increases on struggling developers to complete presold apartments.</p> <p>Amid reports that the government is preparing a bailout of the sector that could cost 300bn yuan (\$44bn), experts at the rating agency S&amp;P have concluded that the fall in sales will be twice as bad as they had originally forecast for this year.</p> <p>"S&amp;P Global Ratings now expects national property sales will fall 28%-33% this year," the note said on Tuesday, "almost double the drop of our prior forecast."</p> <p>Last week's news that disgruntled buyers of apartments at housing projects in more than 100 cities had banded together <a href="#">to withhold payments on unfinished homes</a> has focused attention on the unfolding crisis.</p> <p>The strike has ratcheted up the pressure on developers, who are already facing acute liquidity problems and who depend on customers paying upfront for homes off the plan to keep cash flowing through the business. The proceeds can be used to pay debts as well so the loss of this income will hit hard.</p>

Some high-profile developers have already fallen into default, causing waves of panic in the global financial system – most notably Evergrande, the country’s second-biggest property firm which [admitted last year](#) that it could not pay part of its \$300bn debt mountain.

Recent house sales data indicated that the steep falls in prices were evening out, but that was before news of the mortgage strike prompted a revision in forecasts. S&P thinks the contagion from weakening sales and loss of confidence could take down previously solid companies.

“This boycott on payments could easily spread to other developers, in our view,” S&P said.

Separate research by the agency puts the estimated value of the loans in question at almost 1tn yuan (\$144bn) and could threaten financial stability if there was a sharp drop in prices, as now seems likely amid plunging sales. A [slowing economy](#) and rising unemployment are adding to the downward pressure on sales and prices.

“By stopping payments, China’s mortgagees are effectively pressuring banks and the government to help push developers deliver the residences people paid for,” said S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Yiran Zhong.

Local land sales are also affected as a result of the property downturn and the country’s draconian zero Covid policy.

In the first half of the year, local land sales revenue declined sharply by 31% year-on-year. The decline may be narrowed in the second half of the year, but may still stay weak at -10%, due to subdued developers’ financing, according to UBS.

Beijing is clearly unnerved by recent developments. In the Communist party’s thinking, the stability of the property market affects social stability. This is particularly so in a year that President Xi Jinping is seeking an extraordinary third term as the leader at the party Congress in October.

The most visible sign yet that the authorities in Beijing are beginning to respond to the crisis came on Monday with reports that the government has set up a multibillion-yuan fund to help bail out the stricken sector.

Shares in property companies rallied after Reuters reported that the People’s Bank of China (PBOC) was engineering a fund of up to 300bn yuan (\$44bn) to bail out the sector which accounts for at least 25% of output in the world’s second biggest economy. Chinese property is the biggest single asset class in the world and many investors are concerned that a sharp fall in valuations could have wider consequences for the global economy.

The fund would initially be set at 80bn yuan, according to a source quoted by Reuters. The state-owned China Construction Bank would contribute 50bn yuan, but the money would come from PBOC’s relending facility. If it was successful, other banks would follow suit with a target to raise up to 200-300bn yuan, the source added.

There is also nervousness in the sector as [Evergrande](#) prepares to reveal a long-awaited restructuring plan, promised by the end of July.

The company, which began as a property developer but diversified into resorts and even electric cars, was kneecapped by Beijing’s crackdown on “reckless lending” that began in 2020. It [defaulted on offshore bond repayments in December](#) and is now deemed in default of its entire \$22.7bn worth of offshore debt, and the aftershocks have rippled through the Chinese economy ever since.

In mainland China, Evergrande has been extending its debt repayment obligations, though creditors are growing impatient. Its latest repayment extension proposal on a 4.5bn yuan (\$666.7m) bond was voted

	<p>down this month, while small suppliers, who are owed money, are also threatening to stop paying bank loans.</p> <p>Evergrande also aimed to release a simple restructuring plan for its onshore debt as early as this week, financial information provider REDD reported on Friday.</p> <p>Raymond Cheng, head of China and Hong Kong research at CGS-CIMB Securities, said Evergrande's proposal should also outline what it will do with its unsold projects and existing land bank, which would have a direct impact on the broader property market.</p> <p>"Investors will not look at Evergrande's proposal solely from a company perspective, but also a macro perspective," said Cheng.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 NYC hotspot for monkeypox: 1,000 cases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/26/more-than-1000-monkeypox-cases-confirmed-new-york-city">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/26/more-than-1000-monkeypox-cases-confirmed-new-york-city</a>
GIST	<p>There are now more than 1,000 confirmed cases of monkeypox in New York City, which continues to be a hotspot for the virus, health officials <a href="#">said on Monday</a>.</p> <p>New York reached 1,040 cases as of Monday, said the most recent information released by the city. That accounts for about a quarter of all of the confirmed cases in the US.</p> <p>The US <a href="#">leads the world</a> in confirmed cases, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). As of Monday, there were 3,846 confirmed cases in the US and 18,095 globally, the CDC said. The World Health Organization (WHO) <a href="#">declared the outbreak</a> a public health emergency on Saturday.</p> <p>The virus is spreading primarily among men who have sex with men, research has shown. Close sexual contact was responsible for transmission in 95% of cases, <a href="#">one recent study found</a>.</p> <p>There <a href="#">is a divide</a> in New York City's health department over whether the agency should advise gay men to change their sexual behavior amid the outbreak.</p> <p>Even as cases in New York have surged, <a href="#">officials have struggled</a> to respond with adequate vaccination and testing. At the end of June, as New Yorkers scrambled to get a limited supply of monkeypox vaccines, there were 300,000 doses sitting in a warehouse in Denmark, the New York Times reported on Monday. Then, once officials decided to send those doses to the US, they arrived slowly, missing a chance to slow the spread of the virus.</p> <p>New York's governor, Kathy Hochul, also announced on Monday that the state had <a href="#">reached an agreement</a> with Quest Diagnostics to use a PCR test on people who have a rash consistent with monkeypox.</p> <p>"The real challenge with testing is that it involves swabbing lesions, which must be present for the test to assess whether the virus is also present," the New York state health commissioner, Mary Bassett, said in a statement. "Without lesions, testing is not currently possible. And we will continue working to make sure providers know when and how to test for monkeypox."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Day 154 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/27/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-154-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/27/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-154-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The strategic Antonivskiy Bridge in the Russian-occupied region of Kherson has reportedly been struck by Ukrainian forces</b> hoping to disrupt Russia's main supply route into the southern</li> </ul>

Ukrainian city. Multiple unconfirmed reports suggest Ukrainian forces conducted new strikes late Tuesday. “Explosions in the Antonivskiy Bridge area,” Ukraine’s armed forces said in a Telegram [update](#) just before midnight alongside a video purportedly showing the strikes.

- **Russian forces continued to strike civilian infrastructure in Kharkiv**, Ukraine’s second-largest city, and the surrounding region in the country’s northeast. Regional governor, Oleh Syniehubov, said the strikes on the city resumed around dawn Tuesday. “The Russians deliberately target civilian infrastructure objects hospitals, schools, movie theatres. Everything is being fired at, even queues for humanitarian aid,” Syniehubov told Ukrainian television.
- **Russia’s defence ministry plans to hold strategic military exercises in the east of the country from 30 August to 5 September**. Interfax reported that the militaries of unspecified other countries will be taking part in the regular ‘Vostok’ exercises, citing the defence ministry.
- **Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will hold a one-day visit to the Russian resort of Sochi on 5 August, his office announced**. It is anticipated that he will meet with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.
- **The EU has been forced to [water down its plan to ration gas this winter](#)** in an attempt to avoid an energy crisis generated by further Russian cuts to supply. Energy ministers from the 27 member states, except Hungary, backed a voluntary 15% reduction in gas usage over the winter. Ministers agreed opt-outs for island nations and possible exclusions for countries little connected to the European gas network.
- **Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelenskiy has accused Russia of deliberately cutting supplies of natural gas to impose a “price terror” against Europe**. “Using Gazprom, Moscow is doing all it can to make this coming winter as harsh as possible for the European countries. Terror must be answered - impose sanctions,” he said in a late-night video address.
- **A joint coordination centre (JCC) for Ukrainian grain exports under a UN-brokered deal will be opened in a ceremony in Istanbul on Wednesday**, Turkey’s defence ministry said. Ukraine, Russia, Turkey and the United Nations signed the accord last week to resume Ukraine’s grain exports.
- **Insurance uncertainty [poses the biggest obstacle to grain ships](#) leaving Ukraine’s Black Sea ports this week**, exporters say. Questions remain over whether insurance companies will be willing to insure the vessels as they navigate the mined waters, while buyers are hesitant to make new orders given the risk of Russian attacks.
- **The first train with sanctioned goods has arrived from Russia to Kaliningrad via Lithuania** in the first such trip since the EU said Lithuania must allow Russian goods across its territory. Russian news agency Tass cited regional governor Anton Alikhanov as saying: “It is indeed the first train to have arrived after the EU decision ... [it is] quite an important achievement.” The train reportedly consisted of 60 freight cars with cement.
- **Ukraine aims to strike a deal for a \$15-\$20bn programme with the International Monetary Fund** before year-end to help shore up its war-torn economy, the country’s central bank governor, Kyrylo Shevchenko, told Reuters.
- **The Russian economy appears to be doing better than expected despite western sanctions**. On Tuesday, the International Monetary Fund upgraded Russia’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimate for this year by 2.5%, although its economy is still expected to contract by 6%. “That’s still a fairly sizeable recession in Russia in 2022,” IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas told AFP, adding that rising energy prices are “providing an enormous amount of revenues to the Russian economy”.
- **Boris Johnson compared Zelenskiy’s leadership of Ukraine to the wartime exploits of Sir Winston Churchill**. The British prime minister said he believed “Churchill would have cheered and probably have wept too” when the Ukrainian president insisted he needed “ammunition, not a ride” out of Kyiv when Russia invaded in February.
- **A British citizen who video blogs pro-Kremlin material from Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine has been [added to a UK government sanctions list](#)**. Graham Phillips – the first UK citizen to be added to the growing sanctions list – has been accused of being a conduit for pro-Russian propaganda, receiving medals from the Russian state for his reporting.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/27/ukraine-steps-up-attacks-on-russian-occupied-kherson">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/27/ukraine-steps-up-attacks-on-russian-occupied-kherson</a>
GIST	<p>A key Russian-held bridge into the occupied southern city of Kherson has been hit with a barrage of rocket fire by Ukrainian forces, who appeared to be stepping up operations to isolate the city.</p> <p>Video and witness accounts showed up to 18 detonations on the Antonivskiy Bridge over the Dnipro river, one of the main Russian resupply routes into Kherson, with Russian anti-missile air defences apparently failing to intercept the strikes.</p> <p>There were also reports that a railway bridge was targeted.</p> <p>Ukraine's armed forces published a one-minute clip on Telegram purportedly showing the rocket fire just after 1am on Wednesday. "The moment of the flight over the Antonivskiy Bridge," the force said.</p> <p>In another series of videos posted to Telegram where loud explosions could be heard, the military added: "Explosions in the Antonivskiy Bridge area."</p> <p>A senior presidential adviser to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Anton Gerashchenko, cited Ukraine's armed forces in an update posted on Tuesday morning: "Himars dealt another powerful blow to one of the two bridges, which are used by the invaders for a massive transfer of troops. Let's hope that this time the Antonivskiy Bridge will not withstand the power of the Himars missile attack."</p> <p>"We are not destroying the infrastructure, we are destroying the enemy's plans," said Natalya Humenyuk, spokesperson for the Southern Defence Forces of Ukraine.</p> <p>Kirill Stremousov, the deputy head of the Russian-installed regional authority in Kherson, spoke with Russian media on Tuesday morning, confirming the bridge was shelled but claiming it was still standing. Filmed standing on one side of the bridge in a flak jacket, Stremousov said: "As you can see the movement over the bridge has been suspended. Indeed, tonight there was a strike by Himars."</p> <p>In earlier remarks to Russian media he said: "There were hits [after the attack of the Ukrainian troops] on the Antonivskiy Bridge, we blocked traffic. We will repair it," Stremousov told <a href="#">RIA Novosti</a>.</p> <p>Stremousov added that Ukraine used various artillery systems and the number of missiles "exceeded 10". Some Russian media sources suggested the bridge would require "extensive repairs".</p> <p>The bridge has come under repeated attack in the past week as Ukraine has tried to cut off the handful of routes Russia can use to move heavy weapons in and around Kherson, including a road over the dam at nearby Nova Kakhovka.</p> <p>Kherson, captured in early March, has long been a focus for the Ukrainians, with the defenders making limited gains in the countryside between Mykolaiv and the target city since April. But, apparently helped by longer-range weapons, with an effective firing distance of up to 50 miles (80km), the Ukrainians are growing more confident.</p> <p>Sergiy Khlan, an aide to the administrative head of the Kherson region, told Ukrainian TV a turning point had been reached, and the region "will definitely be <a href="#">liberated by September</a>".</p> <p>The latest strikes come as Russian forces continue to dig in in the south, in preparation for a long-advertised southern counter-offensive by Ukraine.</p> <p>Russian troops have also spanned the Inhulets river with a pontoon bridge in an effort to keep open usable crossings, and are reported to be repairing an airfield in Melitopol while also attempting to repair the Antonivskiy Bridge, after previous attacks left visible holes in the surface of the span.</p>

	<p>The developing battle in the south in the past fortnight has seen Ukrainian forces repeatedly strike Russian ammunition dumps and command posts with US-supplied Himars missile systems, while Russia has fired missiles at Ukrainian positions along the coast.</p> <p>While the position of fighting on the ground is far less clear, it appears that there has been fighting around a Ukrainian bridgehead to the east of the Inhulets river.</p> <p>Elsewhere in the south, Ukrainian forces suffered a setback after being forced to retreat from around the Vuhlehirska power plant and the nearby village of Novoluhanske, where mercenaries from the Russian private military firm Wagner had made advances.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Day 153 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/26/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-153-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/26/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-153-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Russian forces have targeted Odesa region, striking private buildings in coastal villages in the early hours of this morning, local officials are reporting.</b></li> <li>• <b>Russian shelling in Ukraine's southern city of Mykolaiv has also been reported this morning.</b> The head of the city council, <b>Olexander Senkevich</b>, said "A massive missile strike was launched in the south of <a href="#">Ukraine</a> from the direction of the Black Sea, including with the use of aviation."</li> <li>• <b>A residential area in Ukraine's second largest city of Kharkiv has also reportedly been hit this morning.</b> Kharkiv mayor, <b>Igor Terekhov</b>, said the attack by Russian forces was made on the city centre.</li> <li>• <b>Russia is moving convoys of military equipment to Kherson, Ukraine's military claims.</b> In an operation update posted to the armed forces of Ukraine's Telegram on Monday evening, the military said convoys of military equipment were seen moving through Melitopol, in the direction of Kherson.</li> <li>• <b>A major fire broke out at an oil depot in the Budyonnovsky district of Russian-backed Donetsk People's Republic</b> in eastern Ukraine after Ukrainian troops shelled the province, according to local media reports. No casualties or injuries have been reported so far, but the occupying forces of the Donetsk People's Republic issued photographs which showed train tank cars on fire.</li> <li>• <b>The Russian state-controlled energy company Gazprom has announced a drastic cut to gas deliveries through its main pipeline to <a href="#">Europe</a> from Wednesday.</b> The Russian gas export monopoly said it was halting the operation of one of the last two operating turbines due to the "technical condition of the engine", cutting daily gas deliveries via the Nord Stream pipeline to 33m cubic metres a day – about 20% of the pipeline's capacity. Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskiy has called on Europe to respond to Russia's "gas war" by boosting its sanctions against Moscow.</li> <li>• <b>Russian gas giant <a href="#">Gazprom</a> has also sharply increased pressure in the pipeline that delivers Russian gas to Europe without prior notice</b>, the Ukrainian state pipeline operator company has said. Such pressure spikes could lead to emergencies including pipeline ruptures, and pipeline operators are obliged to inform each other about them in advance, the operator of gas transmission systems of Ukraine (OGTSU) said.</li> <li>• <b>The UK's Ministry of Defence has issued its intelligence briefing on the situation in Ukraine for the day, in which it disputes Russia's account of Sunday's missile attack on Odesa</b>, saying "The Russian MoD claimed to have hit a Ukrainian warship and a stockpile of anti-ship missiles. There is no indication that such targets were at the location the missiles hit". Russia initially told Turkey that it was not responsible for the attack. Yesterday Kremlin spokesperson <b>Dmitry Peskov</b> contradicted this, and said that the attack was on military infrastructure.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine says it hopes to <a href="#">start exporting grain from its ports this week</a></b> with the first ships potentially moving from its Black Sea ports within a few days. Details of the procedures will soon be published by a joint coordination centre that is liaising with the shipping industry, deputy UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said. Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said that Turkey</li> </ul>

	<p>expects Kyiv and Moscow to keep to their responsibilities under the recently signed grain export deal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ukrainian forces have bombed a customs checkpoint in the <b>Sevsky</b> district of Russia's <b>Bryansk</b> region using an explosive dropped from a quadcopter drone, according to the region's governor.</li> <li>Melitopol Mayor <b>Ivan Fedorov</b> has claimed that Russian forces are holding more than 5,000 people in a queue at the checkpoint in Vasylivka in Zaporizhzhia as they try to flee the region.</li> <li>Russian-imposed administrators in Ukraine's occupied <b>Zaporizhzhia</b> claim to have issued 8,000 Russian passports in the area. Other members of the administration have previously said that a referendum on the region acceding to the Russian Federation will most likely be held in September.</li> <li>The Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office has issued <b>new casualty figures for children</b> affected by the Russian attack on Ukraine. It says that 358 children have been killed and at least 690 injured since Russia's latest invasion began on 24 February.</li> <li>The possibility that <b>Moldova</b> could become the next territory to be invaded by the Russian Federation "is still a hypothetical scenario," prime minister Natalia Gavrillitsa told CNN, saying "We are worried, of course. If the military actions move further into the southwestern part of Ukraine and toward Odesa, then of course, we are very worried."</li> <li><b>British defence secretary Ben Wallace has condemned those who choose to "sit on the fence" with Putin</b>, saying the Russian President will "in the end eat the fence and then eat you". Wallace, who was on a visit to Bratislava on Monday, made the comments during a joint conference with Slovakian defence minister Jaroslav Nad in Bratislava.</li> <li><b>Russia's top diplomat said Moscow's overarching goal is to topple Zelenskiy's government.</b> Speaking to envoys at an Arab League summit in Cairo on Sunday, the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, said Moscow is determined to help Ukrainians "liberate themselves from the burden of this absolutely unacceptable regime".</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Ukraine recapture Kherson from Russia?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/26/can-ukrainian-forces-recapture-kherson-from-russia">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/26/can-ukrainian-forces-recapture-kherson-from-russia</a>
GIST	<p>In the first phase of the war in <a href="#">Ukraine</a>, the decisive weapon was arguably the British made NLAW anti-tank bazooka, helping repel Russian forces from the fringes of Kyiv. The second phase was dominated by Russia's 152mm artillery, bombing cities to rubble before its ground forces gradually moved in.</p> <p>But the talk now is of the impact of the US-made Himars rocket artillery, which the Ukrainian forces have been using to halt the Russian advance by striking ammunition dumps in the rear – 50 according to the country's defence minister, Oleksiy Reznikov – and whether they can create the conditions for a successful <a href="#">advance towards Kherson</a>, one of the largest cities captured by the invaders.</p> <p>Kherson, captured in early March, has long been a focus for the Ukrainians, with the defenders making limited gains in the countryside between Mykolaiv and the target city since April. But, apparently helped by the longer-range weapons, with an effective firing distance of up to 50 miles (80km), the Ukrainians are growing more confident.</p> <p>Sergiy Khlan, an aide to the administrative head of the Kherson region, told Ukrainian TV a turning point had been reached, and the region "will definitely be <a href="#">liberated by September</a>". It is a bold claim on the available evidence, and perhaps not surprisingly, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, instead talked about liberating Kherson "step by step".</p> <p>The Himars – of which Ukraine has 12 with four more on their way – appear to be having an impact in allowing Kyiv's forces to target four key bridges leading into Kherson. The city, the only Russian stronghold west of the Dnieper River, is obviously strategically vulnerable if Ukraine can muster the force to push the occupiers out.</p>

But the tale of the bridges partly illustrates some of the difficulties Ukraine faces in recapturing its population centres. [Social media postings by Khlan](#) make clear that Ukraine's goal is not to destroy key bridges, in this case the Dariv Bridge across the Inhulets River east of the city, but rather to damage them to the point where the Russians cannot transport heavy equipment across them.

The Ukrainian military wants to ensure that food supplies can still cross into the city, and so, Khlan added, the country's armed forces would "do everything possible not to destroy the structure". That may be a difficult balance to strike, even allowing for the greater accuracy of the Himars – but more importantly it reveals a key constraint on the Ukrainians' ability to strike back.

Russian officials, according to the RIA Novosti news agency, acknowledged damage to another of the key bridges, near the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station, across the Dnieper, about 40 miles to the east of Kherson. The damage, the Russians said, came from Himars rocket artillery, but the news agency shortly after released pictures to show workers apparently [filling in a hole in the road](#).

If cutting off the city by destroying the bridges is challenging, then capturing it, given the remaining civilian population, will be harder. Russia has shown it was willing to destroy cities such as Mariupol and Sievierodonetsk before capturing them. But for Ukraine – seeking to liberate its own territory – that is not obviously an option. Dislodging the Russians may be difficult if they choose to stay in the city itself.

Nor is it obvious that the arrival of one longer-range weapon can create the conditions for a more rapid overall advance. Ukraine has no meaningful air power available, so it must rely on an assembling a preponderance of ground forces against an enemy that has held the city for nearly five months. Meanwhile, western supplies continue to arrive gradually rather than in the numbers Ukraine needs.

Reznikov said on Monday the first three of 15 Gepard mobile artillery guns promised by Germany back in April had arrived in Ukraine, and that he hoped to take delivery of several dozen Leopard tanks soon – most likely from Spain. The increasing supply may help Ukraine tip the balance on one part of the front, but so far there has been no evidence the defenders can manage a breakthrough.

After four months of gradual Russian advance in the east and the south, the arrival of Himars and rocket artillery looks to have tilted the military balance towards an equilibrium. But it is not yet obvious that the invaders can be rolled back: perhaps no wonder then that Khlan optimistically suggested the best option for the Russians was to voluntarily surrender Kherson.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 China heatwave; grid blackouts continue</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/26/chinas-long-running-heatwave-raises-electricity-usage-and-causes-blackouts">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/26/chinas-long-running-heatwave-raises-electricity-usage-and-causes-blackouts</a>
GIST	<p>A long-running heatwave in China has pushed electricity usage to record levels in some areas and led to blackouts, with warnings that the high temperatures are expected to continue for at least another week.</p> <p>More than 300 cities were forecast to reach temperatures above 35C on Tuesday. China Southern Power Grid Company said Monday's usage had surpassed last year's peak load by 3%. The Guangdong province power grid also hit a record high, reaching 142m kilowatts, an increase of 4.89% over last year's peak load. Blackouts were reported in the provincial capital, Guangzhou, which has recorded a full week of maximum temperatures above 37C, including highs of 40C on Sunday and Monday.</p> <p>Yang Lin, the manager of the company's dispatching office, said once temperatures in Guangzhou surpassed 35C, every extra degree meant a corresponding load increase of 3m-5m kilowatts.</p> <p>The company said it was inspecting equipment to avoid overheating and malfunction, and pledged to maintain power supply. In recent years there have been widespread blackouts that have caused havoc across China – blamed on extreme temperatures, rising demand for electricity and shortages in coal, which is still the main source of China's power.</p>

China is among several countries to have moved back towards a coal-focused energy supply, despite ambitious emissions reduction pledges, amid a global crisis exacerbated by the Ukraine conflict. On Friday the ministry of emergency management warned safe operation of the power grid faced “severe tests”.

Last week China’s electricity council reported national power consumption had increased 2.9% year-on-year in the first half of 2022. In June there was a year-on-year increase of 4.7%, which the council attributed to an easing of the pandemic, high temperatures and the impact of economic stabilisation policies.

On Monday, 21 red warnings and 140 orange warnings were issued for high temperatures, predominately across the south-east and in the far west, including Xinjiang. The national meteorological agency warned on Tuesday the high temperatures would continue for about 10 days mostly in the south-east, with temperatures above 40C forecast for Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangxi and Hunan. It also forecast “significant” rainfall in some central and western regions.

China has reported above normal heat since June amid global heatwaves that meteorologists say are linked to human-induced climate change. State media reported the current heatwave was expected to be worse than one earlier this month. More than a dozen local temperature records were broken on Sunday alone. Xinjiang’s heatwaves have been particularly long and widespread, Chen Chunyan, the chief expert at the Xinjiang meteorological observatory, told state media.

“Continued high temperature has accelerated glacial melting in mountainous areas and caused natural disasters such as flash floods, mudslides and landslides in many places,” Chen said.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Firefighters slow spread Yosemite blaze</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/26/california-oak-fire-slow-spread-of-explosive-blaze">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/26/california-oak-fire-slow-spread-of-explosive-blaze</a>
GIST	<p>Firefighters battling an explosive blaze near Yosemite national park significantly slowed the spread of the flames, but thousands of residents from mountain communities remained under evacuation, while smoke drifted to reach Lake Tahoe, parts of Nevada and the San Francisco Bay Area.</p> <p>More than 2,500 firefighters with aircraft support were battling the blaze, known as the Oak fire, that erupted last Friday near the town of Midpines, California. Officials described “explosive fire behavior” on Saturday as flames made runs through overgrown bone-dry vegetation parched by the worst drought in decades.</p> <p>By Tuesday morning, the blaze had consumed more than 18,000 acres of land across the Sierra Nevada foothills, with 26% containment, the California department of forestry and fire protection, or CalFire, said. At least 41 homes and structures had been burned.</p> <p>“Persistent drought, critically dry fuels and tree mortality continue to contribute to the fire’s spread,” CalFire said on Tuesday morning, but humidity levels were slightly higher, aiding crews in their fire fight.</p> <p>On Monday, helicopters had dropped 300,000 gallons of water on the fire, the agency said.</p> <p>Evacuations were in place on Monday for over 6,000 people living across a several-mile span of the sparsely populated fire zone, though a handful of residents defied the orders and stayed behind, said Adrienne Freeman, a US Forest Service spokesperson.</p> <p>“We urge people to evacuate when told,” she said.</p> <p>The cause of the fire remained under investigation.</p>



On Monday, smoke from the fire shrouded Yosemite national park's vistas in a thick grey haze, as the air quality index (AQI) pushed past 250, a level categorised as very unhealthy. Smoke also produced poor visibility to the north of the fire during the day and across the fire at night, CalFire said.

Smoke drifted more than 200 miles (322km) to reach part of northern California and Nevada.

There are two major blazes burning in California, which is experiencing a fairly typical ramp-up to what is sure to be an active fire year once California's infamous Santa Ana and Diablo wind events begin in September, said Kim Zagaris, an adviser with the Western Fire Chiefs Association, which maps wildfires across the country.

"We've been fortunate. We're not quite as far along as we were at this time last year," he said. "But the fuels, the vegetation, are much dryer than they were last year. It's so dry out there."

Zagaris compared the wildfires in California this year to 2008, when few blazes burned early but a mid-summer barrage of lightning hit the state "and before we knew it there were 2,000 fires burning in the northern part of the state".

Fires are an important part of the California climate, and are essential to the health of landscapes and ecosystems across the state, but conditions have shifted, causing some blazes to become catastrophic. The larger and deadlier wildfires in recent years have increased as a history of fire suppression enabled landscapes to grow dense with vegetation.

The climate crisis has left the west much warmer and drier, baking moisture from the overgrowth, and setting the stage for bigger, more erratic burns.. Scientists have said weather will continue to be more extreme and wildfires more frequent, destructive and unpredictable.

Numerous roads were closed, including a stretch of state route 140 that is one of the main routes into Yosemite. The utility Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) said on its website that more than 2,600 homes and businesses in the area had lost power as of Monday and there was no indication when it would be restored.

The Oak fire was sparked as firefighters made progress against an earlier blaze, the Washburn fire, that burned to the edge of a grove of giant sequoias in the southernmost part of Yosemite national park.

The latter fire, spanning a 7.5-sq-mile (19-sq-km) area, was 87% contained on Monday after burning for two weeks and moving into the Sierra national forest.

In North Texas, crews were battling a wildfire that destroyed 16 homes and damaged five others amid sweltering temperatures and strong winds. In a Tuesday statement, officials said there were "significant hotspots" throughout the Chalk Mountain Fire near Glen Rose involving unburned and partially burned fuels. The blaze was 20% contained.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Flash floods kill over 300 in Pakistan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/27/flash-floods-kill-over-300-in-pakistan-as-more-monsoon-rain-is-forecast">https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/27/flash-floods-kill-over-300-in-pakistan-as-more-monsoon-rain-is-forecast</a>
GIST	<p>Flash floods across <a href="#">Pakistan</a> have killed at least 310 people and injured hundreds, with the government issuing warnings of further extreme monsoon downpours in 14 more cities.</p> <p>The southern city of Karachi, home to 16 million people, has seen neighbourhoods and vehicles submerged in knee-deep muddy flood water; roads are impassable. At least 15 people have died since Saturday.</p> <p>Public services in the city have been suspended and businesses closed. The country's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said infrastructure, road networks and 5,600 homes had been damaged.</p>

Pakistan, which suffered an extreme heatwave earlier this year, ranks among the most vulnerable countries on the [Global Climate Risk Index](#), which records the economic and human loss of extreme weather. Pakistan is estimated to have lost 10,000 lives due to environmental disasters, with [\\$4bn financial losses](#) in the decade to 2018.

“Climate is playing its part,” said Afia Salam, a climate activist. “We have shifting monsoon, we have heavier rainfalls, we have rain falling within a very short period of time which used to be spread-over, so these changing weather patterns are there. Karachi facing urban flooding is the sign of the times of unpredictable weather. We have not adapted to these changes, and we have to safeguard the people through proper planning,” she said.

“Government mismanagement is obvious: in Balochistan we always have flash floods and yet we have deaths, and in 2022 even infrastructural losses are unacceptable. There is a lack of coordination between the department and warnings issued, but disaster management is doing nothing,” said Salam.

In Karachi, traders are counting their losses, with heavy flooding in the commercial sector destroying the electronics and garments market and leading to the loss of billions of rupees.

“We have no alternative but to shift our commodities to drier and safer places because the roads turned into rivers – and even vehicles were unable to go through the muddy water on the roads,” said electronics trader Ahmed Khan.

In Orangi Town, a Karachi slum, Farooq Ali and his neighbours face a clean-up after a deluge of flood water entered their homes. “Weather is now unpredictable and life comes to a standstill when rainfall lasts even for a few hours.

“It will take weeks to drain water out, without any support from the municipal government,” said Ali, a 34-year-old vegetable vendor.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Gas prices fall for 40 days straight</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3576426/washington-gas-prices-fall-40-days-straight/">https://mynorthwest.com/3576426/washington-gas-prices-fall-40-days-straight/</a>
GIST	<p>Some good news: Gas prices have been falling for about 40 days in a row. Overall, gas in Washington state is down 43 cents from the record high set on June 16, putting the current average for a gallon of regular unleaded gas at \$5.12.</p> <p>Drivers will notice disparities across gas stations depending on where you’re filling up. In Seattle, Bellevue and Everett, the average is \$5.31, while it’s \$5.02 in Tacoma. The lowest gas average in western Washington is in Mount Vernon-Anacortes, where the average is \$4.82, down a whopping 67 cents from the high of \$5.49.</p> <p>During peak prices, the difference in average highs between Seattle and Mount Vernon was only 20 cents, but it’s currently a difference of 50 cents.</p> <p>Experts say those bigger disparities in prices across gas stations show some retailers are reluctant to adjust prices lower.</p> <p>Jeff Shulman, a professor at the University of Washington’s Foster School of Businesses, says prices are typically slow to fall.</p> <p>“In general, it’s really hard to raise prices because consumers notices prices rising. Once you’ve raised prices successfully, you don’t want to drop them because you’ve maintained that same profit,” Shulman said.</p>

	<p>In Seattle, many gas stations are still holding on to gas prices at \$5.69 a gallon, which is Seattle-Bellevue-Everett's record average high set back on June 17.</p> <p>"It's ridiculous. It's depressing. Almost \$6 for gas is crazy," said Bishop Bear, an Auburn driver who commutes to Seattle. "Then, you're stuck in traffic. I'm about to run out of gas a lot, you know what I mean?" he said.</p> <p>"It's hard. It's hard for the average Joe to even get by," said Dustin Swinehart, another driver who commutes to Seattle.</p> <p>The good news: Experts expect gas prices to keep falling over the next few weeks.</p> <p>"I expect the price of gas will continue to come down slowly in the short term," Shulman said.</p> <p>Shipman said the biggest reason for the price drop is sticker shock, which has caused drivers to change their behavior. In response, crude oil prices have dropped, and retailers are now following suit, albeit slowly.</p> <p>"I walk more now. I've lost, like, 20 pounds," Bear said.</p> <p>"Do the speed limit and try to avoid extra driving," Swinehart said.</p> <p>Shulman warns that if storms disrupt refineries once hurricane season takes full force, prices could go back up again.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Covid outbreaks hit TSA, airlines at LAX</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/transportation/covid-outbreaks-hit-tsa-american-and-southwest-airlines-at-lax/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/transportation/covid-outbreaks-hit-tsa-american-and-southwest-airlines-at-lax/</a>
GIST	<p>COVID-19 outbreaks have hit Los Angeles International Airport with at least 400 confirmed cases among Transportation Security Administration staff and workers at American and Southwest airlines, according to county health officials.</p> <p>At least 233 TSA staffers at LAX have tested positive for the coronavirus since an outbreak was first detected among workers June 9, <a href="#">according to the L.A. County Department of Public Health</a>.</p> <p>The TSA outbreak would be the largest active outbreak being monitored by the department, which records outbreaks at residential care facilities, workplaces, food and retail stores, homeless service locations, schools, jails, law enforcement settings and courts.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 King Co. to spend \$120K heat staff planner</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/king-county-looks-to-spend-120k-toward-dealing-with-increasing-summer-temperatures">https://www.q13fox.com/news/king-county-looks-to-spend-120k-toward-dealing-with-increasing-summer-temperatures</a>
GIST	<p><b>ISSAQUAH, Wash.</b> - King County is planning to invest about \$120,000 toward dealing with the increasing heat during the summer.</p> <p>Last year, a three-day heat wave with temperatures above 100 degrees, <a href="#">killed more than 30 people in King County</a>.</p> <p>This week, <a href="#">high temperatures are back in the area</a> and FOX 13 News is asking King County officials what they are doing differently following last year's tragic deaths.</p>

"I think in many ways, we are very ready," said Lara Whitely Binder, the climate preparedness program manager for King County.

She says following last year's heat wave, the county knows what to expect, and how to react.

"Earlier messaging about heat, and that messaging is inclusive of how to get to cooling centers, how to stay safe in the heat, how to regulate temperatures, lower temperatures, in places that you live, your apartments, your homes," she said.

These examples are part of the short-term strategies the county says it is focusing on for future heat waves.

Whitely Binder said the county is looking to create both short-term and long-term plans to address the increasing heat in the region. The plan is to spend [\\$120,000 from a FEMA grant to hire a staff member to help create these plans](#).

Some long-term plans that are already being considered include looking into ways to get air conditioning units into both older and newer homes. Many homes in the region do not have A/C units, because they never needed them.

Whitely Binder says the county is also looking at the issues with heat islands. Heat islands are more developed parts of the county, with buildings and pavement, that get much hotter than other parts of the region. The idea would be to create more shading in these heat islands with things like trees and other structures.

However, these long-term plans could be decades out, Whitley Binder said.

Whitely Binder tells FOX 13 News there are some efforts that are happening now, or are already in the works.

She says the county is planning on installing 150 heat pumps, which provide both cooling and heating at a 1/3 of the cost of electricity into lower-income family homes.

Whitley Binder says King County Metro is also getting involved. She says using heat maps as means to find areas in need, Metro is installing bus stop shelters to provide shade, instead of just bus stop signs.

She also says the county's [land conversation initiative](#), which is focusing on acquiring open space to save 65,000 acres of county land, can also be seen through a heat lens. She says this open space can provide respite for people who live in or near heat islands.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Strong quake hits northern Philippines</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/world/asia/philippines-earthquake.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/world/asia/philippines-earthquake.html</a>
GIST	<p>MANILA — A strong earthquake hit the northern Philippines on Wednesday morning, killing at least four people, causing dozens of landslides and severely damaging buildings, officials said.</p> <p>The 7.0 magnitude quake struck at 8:43 a.m. at a depth of 10 kilometers, or six miles, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.</p> <p>“This is a major quake,” Renato U. Solidum, the head of the institute, said in an interview with a local radio station. He said it had been felt with “relatively moderate intensity” hundreds of miles south, in Manila, the capital.</p> <p>The quake’s epicenter was in Luzon, the Philippines’ most populous island, but in its northwest, where comparatively few people live. By midafternoon, four people were known to have been killed, said Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr.</p>

Officials said the quake had caused at least 50 landslides. Some remote areas had not yet been reached, and it was possible that more deaths would be reported.

At least 44 people were injured, said Erwin Tulfo, the Philippine secretary of social welfare.

Officials released photos from Abra Province, where the quake's epicenter was, that showed damage to buildings, some of which had partly collapsed. Other photos from Baguio City, in nearby Benguet Province, showed patients sheltering on the grounds of a hospital after being evacuated. One sat in a wheelchair, attended by medical personnel.

Some major highways were blocked. The disaster risk agency said no damage had been reported at hydropower dams in the affected area. In Manila, light rail train service was briefly suspended at some stations.

The Philippines' new president, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., said at a news conference that he would not visit the quake-hit areas immediately because he did not want to interfere with the work of local officials. He said he might go on Thursday.

Mr. Marcos said the chandeliers in his Manila office swung when the quake struck. "It was very strong," he said. "Stronger than usual."

The Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands, lies along the so-called Ring of Fire, a region where tectonic plates sometimes grind together to cause deadly earthquakes.

Two earthquakes in the central Philippines each killed nearly 100 people in 2012 and 2013. In 2019, an earthquake west of Manila left at least 11 people dead.

The seismology institute initially reported that the quake Wednesday had a magnitude of 7.3, but later downgraded its estimate. There was no risk of a tsunami from the quake because the fault was inland, the institute said.

The tectonic plate under the Philippine Sea has produced seven earthquakes of at least 8.0 magnitude and 250 others larger than 7.0, according to the United States Geological Survey.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Tunisia new constitution returns 1-man rule</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/world/middleeast/tunisia-constitution-democracy.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/world/middleeast/tunisia-constitution-democracy.html</a>
GIST	<p>Tunisians approved a new Constitution that cements the one-man rule instituted by President <a href="#">Kais Saied</a> over the past year, according to the results <a href="#">of a referendum</a> released on Tuesday, dealing a body blow to a democracy built with immense effort and high hopes after the overthrow of the country's dictator more than a decade ago.</p> <p>Tunisia, where the Arab Spring uprisings began in 2011, was internationally lauded as <a href="#">the only democracy to survive</a> the revolts that swept the region. But that chapter effectively ended with the passage of the <a href="#">new charter</a>, which enshrines the almost absolute power that Mr. Saied conferred on himself a year ago when he <a href="#">suspended Parliament</a> and fired his prime minister.</p> <p>Still the referendum on Monday was undercut by mass boycotts, voter apathy and a setup heavily tilted toward Mr. Saied. The Constitution was approved by 94.6 percent of voters, according to the results released by the electoral authority.</p> <p>"The masses that came out today across the country show the significance of this moment," Mr. Saied said in an address to cheering supporters in downtown Tunis a few hours after the polls closed. "Today marks a new chapter of hope and turning the page on poverty, despair and injustice."</p>



In his remarks, Mr. Saied denied any tendency toward authoritarianism. But the new Constitution will return Tunisia to a presidential system like the one it had under Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the authoritarian ruler toppled in the so-called Jasmine Revolution of 2011. It also weakens Parliament and most other checks on the president's power while giving the head of state the ultimate authority to form a government, appoint judges and present laws.

It preserves most of the 2014 Constitution's clauses concerning rights and liberties. But in contrast to the previous Constitution, which divides power between Parliament and the president, the new one demotes the legislature and the judiciary to something more akin to civil servants, granting the president alone the authority to appoint government ministers and judges and weakening Parliament's ability to withdraw confidence from the government.

Capping years of political paralysis, the referendum could spell the end of a young democracy that many Tunisians had come to view as corrupt and woefully inadequate at guaranteeing bread, freedom and dignity — the ideals they chanted for in 2011.

But with turnout low at about 30 percent and most major political parties boycotting the vote to avoid lending it greater legitimacy, Mr. Saied now stands on slippery ground, his ability to carry out further reforms in question.

The State Department spokesman, Ned Price, noted the low turnout in the referendum and concern among civil society groups about the process, including “the lack of an inclusive and transparent process and limited scope for genuine public debate during the drafting of the new constitution.”

“We also note concerns that the new constitution includes weakened checks and balances that could compromise the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms,” Mr. Price said at a daily press briefing.

The [inability of the democratic system to deliver](#) good jobs and put food on the table, clean up widespread corruption or produce much-needed reforms pushed many Tunisians to look to Mr. Saied for a rescue. The former constitutional law professor was elected to the presidency in 2019 largely because he was a political outsider.

By 2021, two-thirds of Tunisians associated democracy with instability, indecision and a weak economy, according to an [Arab Barometer survey](#).

When Mr. Saied seized power a year ago, celebrations erupted in the streets of the capital, Tunis. Polls showed an overwhelming majority of Tunisians supported his actions, even as opponents and analysts called them a coup. But he [declared](#) his power grab necessary to fulfill the long-unmet goals of the revolution and rid the country of corruption.

“If you tell me about democracy or human rights and all that stuff, we haven't seen any of it in the last 10 years,” said Rafaa Baouindi, 50, a bank employee who cast a “yes” vote in downtown Tunis on Monday. “What is happening today, I call it a new era, in a good sense. It can't be worse than it was over the last decade.”

He said he did not mind the Constitution's concentration of powers in the hands of the president. “A boat needs one captain,” he said. “Personally, I need one captain.”

For supporters, an added spur to voting for Mr. Saied's new Constitution was the dread that Ennahda, the Islamist political party that dominated Parliament before Mr. Saied dissolved it, would return to power. Mr. Saied and his backers stoked that longstanding fear among secular Tunisians during the lead-up to the referendum.

The low turnout, however, reflects the weakening of Mr. Saied's popular support over the last year, as the [economy declined](#), corruption flourished and the president grew increasingly authoritarian.

	<p>Tunisians questioned his focus above all else on putting a new Constitution in place and making other political reforms at a time when the government was struggling to pay wages, the prices of bread and other staples were soaring as a result of the war in Ukraine, and decent jobs still seemed far out of reach for many Tunisians.</p> <p>Mr. Saied lost more support when he started <a href="#">to rule almost exclusively by decree</a>, jailing opponents and critics and using military courts to try them, placing restrictions on the news media and seizing control of formerly independent bodies such as the country's top judicial oversight council and the elections authority.</p> <p>Souring on his one-man rule, all but about half a million Tunisians ignored Mr. Saied's calls to participate in an <a href="#">online survey</a> about the country's future. But the opposition remained fragmented, and failed to offer credible alternatives to Tunisians with misgivings about Mr. Saied.</p> <p>Still, the passage of the referendum — if by no means the resounding victory Mr. Saied might have hoped for — was widely expected. Mr. Saied appointed the board of the formerly independent elections authority as well as the committee that drafted the new Constitution, and no minimum participation was required for the referendum to pass.</p> <p>Those who campaigned against the proposal said the entire process was tilted toward the “yes” side, with government ministers calling for Tunisians to support the new Constitution and state-funded media largely featuring pro-Saied voices.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Russia cuts gas flow to Europe</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/world/europe/russia-germany-gas-cut-eu.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/world/europe/russia-germany-gas-cut-eu.html</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN — On the eve of a European Union emergency meeting on cutting natural gas consumption, Russia's state-owned gas monopoly said Monday that it would slash gas deliveries to Germany, as President Vladimir V. Putin once again showed his unpredictability and his power to inflict pain on the bloc for backing Ukraine.</p> <p>E.U. energy ministers are set to meet Tuesday to weigh a 15 percent reduction in gas use, specifically because of fears that the Kremlin could create artificial shortages threatening heat and power generation over the winter. As if to confirm such worries, Gazprom, the Russian company, on Monday said it would cut by half the flow through its pipeline to Germany to just 20 percent of capacity — less than <a href="#">a week after resuming limited flows</a> following a maintenance shutdown.</p> <p>Western officials dismissed the Russian explanation of equipment troubles — coincidentally or not, with German equipment — as nothing but a cover for its manipulation. “Based on our information, there is no technical reason for a reduction in deliveries,” the German Economy Ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, the E.U. executive branch, said last week, “Putin is trying to push us around this winter,” as she proposed that member countries <a href="#">cut gas use by 15 percent through next spring</a>. The reduction is aimed at building up depleted stores and better positioning themselves for a possible Russian squeeze.</p> <p>“This is exactly the sort of scenario that President von der Leyen was referring to last week,” her spokesman said on Monday. “This development validates our analysis.”</p> <p>But as Western countries attempt to curb the flow of fossil fuel revenue that supports Russia's government, its war machine and much of its economy, their moves have required a daunting combination of agreement among each other, placating public opinion in their democracies and steering global markets.</p>

News of Gazprom's latest supply cut drove the price of European gas futures up 12 percent on Monday; the price, previously below 30 euros per megawatt-hour, has soared in the past year, at times topping €180, or \$184.

The autocratic Mr. Putin has shown since invading Ukraine in February that he has [plenty of leverage](#) on his side, particularly in tightening or loosening the energy spigot, and can use it at his sole discretion. He has also demonstrated his knack for keeping adversaries guessing and off-balance, with his government often sending contradictory signals.

On Friday, Russia signed a deal to [allow grain shipments](#) from the blockaded port of Odesa to alleviate a global food shortage — and a day later [hit the port with missiles](#), putting the agreement in jeopardy. Even so, Ukraine said Monday that it was moving ahead with the plan and a United Nations spokesman said the first ship could set sail in days.

Western countries are shutting down most imports of Russian oil. But that has contributed to shortages that have driven up prices, buoying Kremlin revenues and angering Western consumers, while Moscow makes deals to sell to China and India, instead. The Biden administration is trying to orchestrate an international deal to limit the prices Russia can charge on world oil markets, but it is a financially and [diplomatically complex](#) endeavor.

It took weeks of wrangling for the European Union [to agree to cut off most Russian oil](#), and making the deal required delaying some parts for several months and making exemptions for some small countries.

New divisions have emerged on the E.U. proposal to cut gas use, as countries like Greece and Spain that do not rely heavily on Russian gas have chafed at the idea of asking businesses and people to conserve to help Germany, their wealthier northern partner. And European officials are racing to come up with alternative supplies from the Middle East, the United States and elsewhere.

The latest supply cut should make it clear to the 27 E.U. member countries how vulnerable they are, and how crucial it is that they move quickly and decisively to conserve gas, said Simone Tagliapietra, a senior fellow at Bruegel, a research institute based in Brussels.

“Gazprom’s announcement should not surprise,” Mr. Tagliapietra said. “Russia is playing a strategic game here. Fluctuating already low flows is better than a full cutoff as it manipulates the market and optimizes geopolitical impact.”

Russia ordinarily supplies 40 percent of the gas used in the European Union, but the flow fell to less than one-third its average in June. Gas storage facilities in Europe, normally almost full at this point in the year in preparation for winter, are low, leaving the entire continent vulnerable to shortages that would upend industry and private lives alike.

Germany, with Europe’s largest economy, has been especially reliant on Russia for gas, getting 55 percent of its supply from there before the invasion, though that has declined sharply. The primary channel for that supply is the 760-mile Nord Stream 1 pipeline under the Baltic Sea.

In recent years, the pipeline has been shut down for maintenance for about 10 days each July, but in 2020 and 2021 it ran at or near capacity both before and after that closure. This year, Russia started cutting gas shipments already in mid-June, so that stores were low by the time of the shutdown. Gazprom blamed the reduction on a missing turbine that had been shipped to Canada for repair by the German company Siemens.

The turbine was returned to Germany last week and is now making its way to Russia. When the maintenance period ended, Gazprom resumed flow, but only to about 40 percent of capacity. Then on Monday, the company said that would drop to 20 percent, stating on its social media accounts that it was “shutting down one more gas turbine engine produced by Siemens.”

Hours before the announcement, the chief of Germany's agency that regulates utilities, Klaus Müller, said the country's storage facilities had reached 65.9 percent of capacity, on track to reach the goal of 75 percent by the beginning of September. Now that is in question.

The European Commission conservation plan calls for shared sacrifice — with the promise of aid to the countries that run into the deepest trouble — on the rationale that the E.U. economy is so integrated that a blow to one nation is a blow to all. That is especially true since the most immediately vulnerable country, Germany, is the continent's economic powerhouse.

Some member states in the bloc's south and beyond that use little gas or do not buy it primarily from Russia say the commission's proposal makes little sense, but a version of it could survive a vote. Unlike E.U. sanctions and the partial oil embargo, which require unanimity, the gas conservation plan needs only a "reinforced majority," meaning the backing of 15 member states representing 65 percent of the E.U. population.

The commission wants to put itself in charge of declaring an energy emergency if gas stocks fall below a certain level, allowing it to enforce mandatory rationing of gas. Such an unusual boost to its normal powers is unlikely to be accepted by E.U. countries, which do not like to cede autonomy to the bloc.

Intensive talks to prepare for the meeting over the past few days have centered around making adjustments to soften the proposal, to make it shorter in duration and to put national governments in European Union capitals, rather than the E.U. bureaucracy in Brussels, in charge of implementing it.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 King Co. approves free transit for youths</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/king-county-approves-free-transit-for-youth/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/king-county-approves-free-transit-for-youth/</a>
GIST	<p>Beginning Sept. 1, people 18 and under will ride King County buses, water taxis and streetcars for free. On Thursday, the Metropolitan King County Council approved 9-0 a <a href="#">plan introduced earlier this year</a> by Executive Dow Constantine. The yeas vote kicks off a scramble to get as many ORCA cards into the hands of young people as possible.</p> <p>“As we all know, it goes beyond the instant relief of having to not pay the fare and the increased convenience, but it helps build lifetime transit users,” said Councilmember Rod Dembowksi.</p> <p>The new policy comes as the result of a nearly \$17 billion transportation funding package passed by state lawmakers in Washington's 2022 legislative session, with almost exclusively Democratic votes. While much of the measure will be rolled out over the next 16 years, elected officials wanted a component with an immediate impact. Enter free transit for youths.</p> <p>The state transportation package includes \$3 billion for transit, about half of which will only flow to local transit agencies through grants if they adopt policies to make rides free for youths. This includes local buses, as well as Amtrak trains and Washington State Ferries.</p> <p>So far, every local transit agency in the state has indicated it will adopt free fares for youths in order to become eligible for state funding. Transit is already free for youths in Everett. Community Transit, Kitsap Transit, Pierce Transit and Sound Transit will similarly go fare-free for youths by the beginning of the school year.</p> <p>King County is eligible for an estimated \$31.7 million in new transit funding as a part of the state transportation package, which could go toward expanding bus service or improving facilities. The cost of making transit free for everyone under 19 is estimated to be around \$10 million.</p> <p>“We’ve had great debates about fare evasion for youth,” said Councilmember Dave Upthegrove. “All those debates and all that hassle goes away because young people can now ride transit whenever they need to beginning this fall at no cost.”</p>

	<p>The state's deadline for adopting free youth fares is Oct. 1, but Constantine said he wanted the policy to start near the beginning of the school year. The major logistical hurdle is how to supply every person under 19 with an ORCA card so they can tap on and off local transit. Metro has an existing relationship with Seattle Public Schools, but must expand those efforts to young people not in Seattle.</p> <p>General manager of King County Metro, Terry White, said the agency will launch a "wave of advertising" to get more cards into the hands of the roughly 300,000 newly eligible young people. In the meantime, youths can use identification from their school while boarding. If a young person lacks an ID, they will still be allowed to ride for free.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 King Co. wildfire risk reduction strategy</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wildfire/king-county-wildfire-risk-reduction-strategy/281-a75ef700-d990-4092-9d42-5baaaa4a212b">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wildfire/king-county-wildfire-risk-reduction-strategy/281-a75ef700-d990-4092-9d42-5baaaa4a212b</a>
GIST	<p>MIRRORMONT, Wash. — King County Executive Dow Constantine announced a new <a href="#">Wildfire Risk Reduction Strategy</a> Tuesday, recommending actions to prevent wildfires, prepare responses for when they do occur and engage in forest recovery techniques when they are complete.</p> <p>The County began working on the strategy while completing its <a href="#">2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan</a>, and several leaders noted the connection between climate change and wildfire threats in the wildland-urban interface, or the area where the wilderness and developed land meet.</p> <p>"As King County encounters hotter, drier summers as the result of climate change, there is a greater potential for devastating fires in communities like this one," King County Executive Dow Constantine said.</p> <p>The Washington Department of Natural Resources' most recent maps significantly expand the wildland-urban interface in King County - putting about 15% of King County's population in a wildland-urban interface area, meaning those places are at greater risk when wildfires do occur.</p> <p>King County says firefighters responded to more than 700 brushfires in the summer of 2021. Eastside Fire and Rescue says nearly all of its firefighters are now wildland-certified, and their personal protective equipment now includes wildfire-specific tools.</p> <p>Strengthening emergency response is also a cornerstone of the plan, along with enhancing community evacuation protocols and making sure they keep up with population growth.</p> <p>"That growth, coupled with the impacts of climate change, the hotter drier days, that's placing the need for wildfire preparedness and prevention at the doorsteps of many of our community partners," Eastside Fire and Rescue Assistant Chief Ben Lane said.</p> <p>An additional and major component of the plan is working toward forest resilience, aiming to empower a diversity of tree species in different development stages.</p> <p>King County says while large-scale forest thinning and prescribed burns are common tactics throughout much of the Western United States, their experts believe those actions are not the most effective or feasible in western Washington forests.</p> <p>Applying those tactics here would fundamentally alter the dense, complex structure of westside forests and adversely affect ecological functions. Vegetation recovers quickly in the central Puget Sound region, so any risk reduction would be short-lived.</p> <p>King County's strategy recommends targeted fuel reduction around critical infrastructure and homes where it can reduce the potential for damage, particularly from smaller fires. Removing and controlling the</p>



	spread of invasive plant species – some of which are particularly flammable – can further reduce wildfire risks, particularly in areas that are at high risk for ignition such as roadways.
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Driving to Canada for monkeypox vaccine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/monkeypox/seattle-residents-drive-canada-monkeypox-vaccine-doses/281-6c2fcaa4-94fb-4a5e-ab36-0ee9c9683c05">https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/monkeypox/seattle-residents-drive-canada-monkeypox-vaccine-doses/281-6c2fcaa4-94fb-4a5e-ab36-0ee9c9683c05</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — With supplies limited, Seattle residents are traveling far and wide to acquire doses of the monkeypox vaccine, as the virus has been deemed a <a href="#">global health emergency</a> by the World Health Organization.</p> <p>It can take up to a week or more for symptoms of monkeypox to show up, so University of Washington virologists say we will see more cases soon.</p> <p>According to the state department of health, the supply for the vaccine is limited. To get the vaccine in Washington, you have to have close contact with a confirmed case or have contracted monkeypox.</p> <p>"King County health was being very slow with the uptake of access to dosing and communicating in general," said Seattle resident Justin Moore.</p> <p>92 people have tested positive for monkeypox, according to Washington's Department of Health.</p> <p>The state has requested and received 3,550 doses of the vaccine, according to the Administration for Strategic Preparedness &amp; Response.</p> <p>"It became apparent to me that I was going to have to seek out other places to get it," said Moore, who decided to take his health into his own hands.</p> <p>With no definitive timeline to get the vaccine, Moore and his friends made the two-hour trip to British Columbia.</p> <p>"It was actually very easy, very seamless."</p> <p>He said it took 15 minutes to get vaccinated and that they weren't worried about citizenship.</p> <p>The State Department of Health told KING 5 that because of the limited supply, there are no plans to hold mass vaccination clinics.</p> <p>"That's one of the major barriers that we are hearing about in terms of being able to access the vaccine," Moore said.</p> <p>Moore connects the harmful stigma surrounding monkeypox with previous infectious disease outbreaks.</p> <p>"I can't help as a gay man feel that as a gay man we haven't learned much from other crises where we've been used as targets for these outbreaks."</p> <p>It's a sentiment that Doctor Stephaun Wallace said could harm communities.</p> <p>"Please do not think that you don't identify as a gay person or the LGBTQIA community that you are not at risk for monkeypox," Wallace said.</p> <p>Wallace is a staff scientist with Fred Hutch, and he also works with HIV and COVID vaccine trials. He has watched the stigma perpetuated with HIV and now monkeypox.</p>

	<p>Wallace is a staff scientist with Fred Hutch, and he also works with HIV and COVID vaccine trials. He has watched the stigma perpetuated with HIV and now monkeypox.</p> <p>"The way that stigma has been perpetuated for monkeypox has certainly appeared to me and others that we have not learned enough," said Wallace.</p> <p>For now, Moore says he feels safer now that he's vaccinated.</p> <p>"We owe it to our communities to do better and protect those who would be most affected by monkeypox," Moore exclaimed.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/26 DOH: over 100 monkeypox cases in WA</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/over-100-people-diagnosed-with-monkeypox-washington/KCE5326AKNABPDX7VH55GW5IKM/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/over-100-people-diagnosed-with-monkeypox-washington/KCE5326AKNABPDX7VH55GW5IKM/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Monkeypox cases in Washington state crossed into triple digits on Tuesday, according to the Washington State Department of Health.</p> <p>Since the first case was confirmed on May 27 in King County, the virus has spread across the state in less than a month.</p> <p>As of Tuesday, 90 people have tested positive in King County, three in Pierce County, two in Snohomish County and five others around the state.</p> <p>Monkeypox is a viral disease that causes rashes and other symptoms.</p> <p>Many cases occur among men who have sex with men, although monkeypox can still spread person-to-person with any kind of close, skin-to-skin contact, according to the Washington State Department of Health.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/26 Homeless issues close popular I-5 rest area</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/smokey-point-rest-area-on-i-5-closed-due-to-issues-with-homeless-campers">https://komonews.com/news/local/smokey-point-rest-area-on-i-5-closed-due-to-issues-with-homeless-campers</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>ARLINGTON, Wash. — Homeless campers led to the closure of a popular rest area on I-5 and now a plan is being drawn up to keep the facility from being overrun again.</p> <p>The Smokey Point rest area in Arlington has been shut-down since July 18 so WSDOT can work with Washington State Patrol to keep people from staying beyond posted parking limits.</p> <p>Nicholas Damm, who was traveling to Sumas with his family, said rest areas offer drivers a safe place to take a break.</p> <p>"The rest stop is there for a particular reason and if it can't be used for that reason then something needs to be done," Damm said. "I understand that displacing them is an absolute tragedy in itself, and them not having a safe place to camp is an absolute tragedy, but I understand why those steps were taken."</p> <p>A spokesperson for State Patrol said, "The sites were simply not designed to safely and effectively host long-term stays or vehicular residency."</p> <p>Jesse Wells, who was passing through on his way to Victoria, B.C., said he understands the appeal of a spot like Smokey Point.</p> <p>"Where are they going to go? There are washrooms there, services right there," Wells said.</p>

	<p>Smokey Point was shut down last October as well for people staying too long, excessively dumping their trash, vandalizing the buildings and even threatening WSDOT employees.</p> <p>State Patrol said the solutions developed for this site can help with other rest areas across Washington.</p> <p>A timeline to re-open Smokey Point could be announced later this week. There are 47 safety rest areas statewide.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 IMF: global recession 'could be at hand'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/26/business/economy-news-inflation-stocks#imf-world-economic-outlook">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/26/business/economy-news-inflation-stocks#imf-world-economic-outlook</a>
GIST	<p>The International Monetary Fund <a href="#">warned on Tuesday</a> that the world could soon be on the brink of a global recession as economic slowdowns in the United States, Europe and China along with twin food and energy crises weighed heavily on growth.</p> <p>In an update of the World Economic Outlook, the I.M.F. said economic prospects had darkened significantly in recent months as war in Ukraine, inflation and a resurgent pandemic inflicted pain on every continent. If the thicket of threats continues to intensify, the world economy faces one of its weakest years since 1970, a period of intense stagflation across the globe.</p> <p>“The world may soon be teetering on the edge of a global recession, only two years after the last one,” Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, the I.M.F.’s chief economist, wrote in a blog post accompanying the report. Put simply, the outlook for the global economy is “increasingly gloomy,” he wrote.</p> <p>The I.M.F. downgraded its global growth forecasts from its April projections, predicting that output will fall to 3.2 percent in 2022, from 6.1 percent last year. With central banks around the world raising interest rates to tame inflation, growth is expected to slow further next year.</p> <p>Inflation is also rising more rapidly and broadly than the I.M.F. anticipated earlier this year. It now expects prices to rise 6.6 percent in rich countries and 9.5 percent in emerging markets and developing economies.</p> <p>“The risks to the outlook are overwhelmingly tilted to the downside,” the I.M.F. said.</p> <p>The economic storm facing the world is the result of diminished consumer spending power in the United States, the impact of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on Europe’s economies, and the <a href="#">property crisis</a> and lockdowns in China, where Beijing continues to take severe measures to <a href="#">contain coronavirus outbreaks</a>.</p> <p>The I.M.F. underscored that its forecasts are subject to considerable uncertainty and that more downgrades could come. It pointed to the prospect of a sudden shutdown of Russian gas flows to Europe, the stubborn persistence of inflation and more widespread lockdowns in China as looming threats.</p> <p>“Under this scenario, both the United States and the euro area experience near-zero growth next year, with negative knock-on effects for the rest of the world,” Mr. Gourinchas said.</p> <p>According to the report, the likelihood of a global recession is rising. It said the probability of a recession starting in one of the Group of 7 advanced economies was now nearly 15 percent, four times higher than its usual level. And it said some indicators suggested that the United States was already in a “technical” recession, which the I.M.F. defines as two consecutive quarters of negative growth.</p> <p>Data released on Thursday is expected to show that the U.S. economy grew little or perhaps shrank in the second quarter of 2022.</p>

The Federal Reserve is expected to raise interest rates by three-quarters of a percentage point on Wednesday as it tries to slow the economy and tame rapid inflation. While the Fed is aiming for a “soft landing” — in which it cools the economy just enough without tipping it into a recession — policymakers have acknowledged that pulling that off will be a challenge.

The darkening economic prospects in the United States and abroad pose trouble for President Biden and his Democratic Party ahead of midterm elections that will determine who controls Congress.

On Monday, Mr. Biden made the case that the United States was not in a recession and that its economy remained strong.

“We’re not going to be in a recession, in my view,” he said, pointing to the low jobless rate and expressing hope that growth will stay steady even as it slows. “God willing, I don’t think we’re going to see a recession.”

The I.M.F. noted that growth in the United States had been weaker than expected in the first half of the year and that there was “significantly less momentum” in private consumption because of inflation and the expectation of higher borrowing costs.

In a twist, while the I.M.F. downgraded most economies, Russia’s economy is now expected to shrink 6 percent this year rather than the previously forecast 8.5 percent. The I.M.F. said that Russian oil and nonenergy exports were holding up better than expected and that Western sanctions were not having as much bite as expected.

“Domestic demand is also showing some resilience thanks to containment of the effect of the sanctions on the domestic financial sector and a lower-than-anticipated weakening of the labor market,” the I.M.F. report said.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Concern: China potential action on Taiwan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/us/politics/china-taiwan-biden-pelosi.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/us/politics/china-taiwan-biden-pelosi.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Biden administration has grown increasingly anxious this summer about China’s statements and actions regarding Taiwan, with some officials fearing that Chinese leaders might try to move against the <a href="#">self-governing island</a> over the next year and a half — perhaps by trying to cut off access to all or part of the Taiwan Strait, through which U.S. naval ships regularly pass.</p> <p>The internal worries have sharpened in recent days, as the administration quietly works to try to dissuade House Speaker Nancy Pelosi from going through with a proposed visit to Taiwan next month, U.S. officials say. Ms. Pelosi, Democrat of California, would be the first speaker to visit Taiwan since 1997, and the Chinese government has repeatedly denounced her <a href="#">reported plans</a> and threatened retaliation.</p> <p>U.S. officials see a greater risk of conflict and miscalculation over Ms. Pelosi’s trip as President Xi Jinping of China and other Communist Party leaders prepare in the coming weeks for an important political meeting in which Mr. Xi is expected to extend his rule.</p> <p>Chinese officials have strongly asserted this summer that no part of the Taiwan Strait can be considered international waters, contrary to the views of the United States and other nations. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said in June that “China has sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the Taiwan Strait.”</p> <p>American officials do not know whether China plans to enforce that claim. But Senator Chris Coons of Delaware, who is close to President Biden and deals with the administration often on issues involving Taiwan, said “there is a lot of attention being paid” to what lessons China, its military and Mr. Xi might be learning from events in Ukraine.</p>

“And one school of thought is that the lesson is ‘go early and go strong’ before there is time to strengthen Taiwan’s defenses,” Mr. Coons said in an interview on Sunday. “And we may be heading to an earlier confrontation — more a squeeze than an invasion — than we thought.”

Chinese officials are aware that Biden administration officials, also applying lessons learned from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, are trying to [shape their weapons sales to Taiwan](#) to turn the democratic island into what some call a “porcupine” — bristling with enough effective armaments and defense systems to deter Chinese leaders from trying to attack it.

U.S. officials say they are not aware of any specific piece of intelligence indicating the Chinese leadership has decided to move soon on Taiwan. But analysts inside and outside the U.S. government are studying to determine what might be the optimal time for China to take bolder actions to undermine Taiwan and the United States.

A central question is what top Chinese officials think of the evolving strengths of the Chinese military relative to those of Taiwan, the United States and regional U.S. allies that include Japan and South Korea.

Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last week that the Chinese military’s behavior in the Asia-Pacific region was “significantly more and noticeably more aggressive.”

Chinese officials have denounced a steady stream of visits by senior U.S. officials to Taiwan, which Beijing sees as being akin to formal diplomatic engagement with the island. Ms. Pelosi had planned to visit in April but postponed after her aides said she had tested positive for the coronavirus.

“If the United States insists on going ahead, China will take firm and resolute measures to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the U.S. will be responsible for all of the serious consequences,” Zhao Lijian, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, said at a regularly scheduled media briefing on Monday.

U.S. officials said the planning for Ms. Pelosi’s trip was moving ahead despite the rising furor over it.

Ms. Pelosi would be likely to fly to Taipei on a U.S. military aircraft, as is typical of such visits. Some analysts looking at Chinese denunciations of the proposed visit say that China could send aircraft to “escort” her plane and prevent it from landing.

This scenario is a legitimate concern, U.S. officials said, though it is improbable, and any such move would be seen by Washington as a serious escalation. The officials interviewed for this story spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivities over diplomatic matters.

Ms. Pelosi said last week that she does not publicly discuss travel plans, but that “it’s important for us to show support for Taiwan.”

During the Trump administration, a cabinet member and a top State Department official became [the highest-ranking U.S. administration officials](#) to visit Taiwan in a working capacity since 1979, when Washington severed diplomatic ties with Taipei in order to normalize relations with Beijing. Newt Gingrich was the last House speaker to visit Taiwan, 25 years ago.

Asked by reporters about the proposed visit, Mr. Biden [said last Wednesday](#) that “the military thinks it’s not a good idea right now.” He also said he planned to speak with Mr. Xi, the Chinese leader, in the next 10 days. The two last spoke by [video call](#) in March, when Mr. Biden warned there would be “implications and consequences” if China gave material aid to Russia in its Ukraine offensive.

Mr. Xi and other top Chinese officials and Communist Party elders are preparing for the party’s 20th congress in the fall, and they are expected to hold secret meetings in August in the seaside resort of Beidaihe ahead of the formal conclave. Analysts say Mr. Xi will almost certainly break with norms by

seeking to serve a third term as president and extending his tenure as party secretary and chairman of the Central Military Commission.

“The domestic political situation in China right now is extremely tense in the months before the party congress when Xi hopes to be approved for an unprecedented third term,” said Susan L. Shirk, a former senior State Department official and author of “Overreach,” an [upcoming book](#) on Chinese politics.

“The risk is that the visit by Speaker Pelosi will be perceived, including by Xi himself, as a humiliation of his leadership and that he takes some rash action to show his strength,” she said. “What’s more, in view of his recent misjudgments that have harmed the country and sparked internal controversy — the draconian approach to Covid management, aligning with Russia’s war in Ukraine, and the crackdown on private business — we can’t count on his prudence in his military response to Pelosi’s trip. Better to postpone rather than risk war.”

Pentagon and White House officials have been discussing the political environment and potential risks of the trip with Ms. Pelosi’s office. Officials say it is up to her to decide.

Shi Yinhong, a professor of international relations at Renmin University of China in Beijing, said that Beijing would aim for a military response that would be seen as strong, but not so aggressive that it would provoke a larger conflict.

“I don’t think anyone can predict in any detail what China will do militarily,” Mr. Shi said.

Hu Xijin, former chief editor of Global Times, a nationalistic newspaper published by the Communist Party, wrote on Twitter that Chinese military warplanes might shadow Ms. Pelosi’s plane and cross into Taiwan-controlled airspace over the island. He also said China’s actions would amount to “a shocking military response.”

Analysts say China could do something less provocative. It could, for example, send aircraft across the median line down the middle of the strait separating China and Taiwan, as it did in 2020 in response to a visit by Alex Azar, then the U.S. secretary of health and human services.

Chinese fighter jets have crossed that line and flown into the island’s air defense identification zone with increasing frequency since 2020.

On Monday, Joanne Ou, a spokeswoman for Taiwan’s foreign ministry, said Taipei had not received any “definite” information about Ms. Pelosi’s visit.

Officials and lawmakers from Taiwan’s two main political parties have welcomed any such visit by the speaker.

“Speaker Pelosi has many admirers in Taiwan, and her visit would be a strong statement of American support of Taiwan democracy,” said Alexander Huang, the Washington representative of the Kuomintang, the opposition party.

Many in Taiwan worry that if the trip is canceled, it would give Beijing the impression that its intimidation tactics work.

In Washington, some Republican lawmakers have publicly urged Ms. Pelosi to go ahead with the trip as taking a stand against China.

Ivan Kanapathy, a senior associate with the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a China director on the National Security Council under Presidents Trump and Biden, said canceling the trip could undermine Washington’s attempts to strengthen Taiwan’s relations with other democracies and efforts to boost its profile in international organizations and venues.



“A big part of why China worries about what the U.S. does is because we open up space for others,” Mr. Kanapathy said. “And that’s what China really worries about the most — more legitimacy for the Taiwanese government in the international community.”

Some analysts say there are less risky ways to demonstrate support for Taiwan. Washington could send a top military officer, for example, or sign a bilateral trade agreement, which could help the island reduce its economic reliance on China.

U.S. military officials say a sea-and-air invasion of Taiwan would be difficult for the People’s Liberation Army to pull off today. If China did move earlier than expected against Taiwan, it could do so piecemeal, perhaps by first invoking their recent declaration on the status of the Taiwan Strait and conducting a limited operation to gauge Washington’s reaction. Another theory is that Beijing might try to seize an outer island close to China’s coast.

American officials say it is unlikely that the Chinese government has decided what operation, if any, to carry out. But it is a subject being regularly simulated and war-gamed in Washington.

Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, said Friday at the Aspen Security Forum that Taiwan was learning from Ukraine. After years of buying expensive defense systems, he said, Taiwan was paying more attention to “citizen mobilizations” and “information warfare.”

He also noted that supplying Taiwan would add further stress to American military hardware production.

“There are longer-term questions,” he said, “about ensuring that our defense industrial base, the American defense industrial base, and our allies’ defense industrial base can be put in a position to be able to sustain the kind of security assistance that we are going to need to keep supplying Ukraine as well as Taiwan as well as ourselves.”

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HEADLINE	07/26 Drug czar shift: ‘harm reduction approach’
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/us/politics/biden-drug-czar-rahul-gupta.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/us/politics/biden-drug-czar-rahul-gupta.html</a>
GIST	<p>MANCHESTER, N.H. — During a recent interview here, Dr. Rahul Gupta, President Biden’s drug czar, appeared to be on the verge of supporting a radical shift in U.S. drug control policy.</p> <p>Asked for his views on <a href="#">supervised consumption sites</a>, where users bring their own drugs to take under the supervision of trained workers in case they overdose — a concept accepted in Canada and Europe but still technically illegal in the United States under federal law — Dr. Gupta’s eyes lit up. Then he paused, catching himself, and said he could not weigh in yet.</p> <p>The Justice Department is expected to soon decide whether one planned site that it blocked three years ago can operate, giving more insight into the Biden administration’s views on the concept. Many public health experts believe it could help stem a record number of overdose deaths largely caused by synthetic fentanyl.</p> <p>“All of us are enthusiastically waiting” for the department to weigh in, Dr. Gupta said.</p> <p>Support for supervised consumption from the Biden administration would be a major turning point in how the government addresses an epidemic of addiction and overdoses that has endured for decades and now claims more than 100,000 lives a year. Instead of discouraging drug use, such sites aim to keep users from dying, with trained personnel providing syringes and other sterile equipment for using drugs and working to reverse overdoses on the spot.</p> <p>Two supervised consumption sites opened last year in New York City, with <a href="#">early results that researchers say show they are saving lives</a>; although the Trump administration sued in 2019 to <a href="#">stop a supervised consumption site</a> from opening in Philadelphia, the federal government has not intervened</p>

regarding the New York sites. Rhode Island is working to open at least one as soon as this year; other states, including California, are also in the planning stages.

Dr. Gupta is already overseeing what experts describe as the most progressive [federal drug strategy](#) since his office's inception.

The strategy largely rests on the concept of [harm reduction](#), focused not on helping drug users achieve abstinence but on lowering their risk of dying or acquiring infectious diseases. A central piece is providing sterile needles to use in injecting drugs, tools to check drugs for fentanyl and other lethal substances, and naloxone, a medication that can revive people who have overdosed. Mr. Biden is the first president to support the approach.

"It's late by, I don't know, a few decades," Alex Kral, an epidemiologist and drug policy expert at RTI International, a nonprofit research organization, said of the White House support for the approach.

Dr. Gupta's comments in New Hampshire came days after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that overdoses [rose again to record-breaking levels](#) in 2021, nearing 108,000, a year-to-year increase of nearly 15 percent. The recent surge has hit Black and Native American communities [particularly hard](#).

The administration has said it aims to reduce overdose deaths by 13 percent by 2025. Without more harm reduction interventions, Dr. Gupta said, 165,000 people could fatally overdose each year by 2025.

Dr. Gupta, in the eyes of some addiction experts, is an unlikely flag-bearer for the strategy. Just four years ago, he was blamed for [the demise of harm reduction programs](#) in Charleston, W.Va., after he signed off on a report criticizing one heavily used site, leading to its decertification.

He now says the closure of the Charleston program was a significant mistake; in an interview, he emphasized that he had supported more than a dozen harm reduction programs in West Virginia when he was overseeing public health there.

Dr. Gupta describes fentanyl — not the pharmaceutical kind, but a synthetic version produced in illicit laboratories, often in Mexico — as a "Pandora's box" in the nation's drug supply. Because it is strong and sold in varying formulations, small differences in quantity can mean the difference between a drug user's usual dose and one that is deadly. It is often combined with stimulants like methamphetamine and cocaine, or pressed into counterfeit prescription pills offered not only to chronic drug users but to experimenting teenagers.

A [recent study](#) of illicit pills seized by the drug enforcement authorities found that a substantial share of pills marketed as OxyContin, Xanax or the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder drug Adderall now contain fentanyl. Xylazine, an animal tranquilizer that can have harsh effects on humans, has also recently played a role in a [greater share](#) of overdose deaths.

Naloxone, a medication invented in the 1960s that can quickly reverse opioid overdoses, took many years to come into mainstream use in the United States, with federal agencies reluctant to study and fund its use until the last decade, experts said. The F.D.A. approved the first generic naloxone nasal spray only in 2019. Syringe exchanges, now available [in roughly 40 states](#), were also slow to gain broad acceptance.

Naloxone is now fundamental to the nation's efforts to curb overdose deaths. Observing a naloxone training session at an architecture firm in New Hampshire that keeps the medication on site, Dr. Gupta observed that he had grown familiar with the dummies used for such demonstrations.

The goals laid out by the drug control office show how much it has evolved since 1988, when it was created to strive for [a "drug-free" America](#). Its early leaders had backgrounds in law enforcement, leading to more attention to drug trafficking than addiction.

More recent drug czars have shied away from law-and-order atmospherics and emphasized addiction; one of Barack Obama's picks for the job, Michael Botticelli, was himself a former drug user.

Dr. Gupta is the first medical doctor to occupy the role, after serving as the health commissioner in a state — West Virginia — that has consistently had one of the highest rates of overdose deaths in recent decades.

Dr. Dan Ciccarone, a professor of family and community medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, said that Dr. Gupta's arrival at the White House was the culmination of the shift from the moralistic debate around drugs, blaming suppliers and users, to an approach treating the issue as a health crisis, with acceptance of drug use.

"It became a clinical problem that should be handed over to the doctors," he said. "This is the anti-shame approach: 'We love you; we're concerned about you; let's help you be ready.'"

Dr. Gupta is still trailed by accusations that by condemning the Charleston needle exchange with the audit that he and his colleagues there issued in 2018, he had undermined the progress West Virginia had made in implementing harm reduction programs. A large H.I.V. outbreak among people who inject drugs — and a [scathing C.D.C. report](#) — followed.

State legislators piggybacked on the report last year and passed a bill that [severely restricted](#) how syringe exchange programs could operate, calling for identification and the return of used needles — both deterrents to the drug users the programs are intended to help, experts said. It also threatened penalties for sites that did not comply with the new regulations.

"There were a number of counties set to open programs that then didn't," said Joe Solomon, the founder of Solutions Oriented Addiction Response, or [SOAR](#), which [ran a syringe exchange program](#) in Charleston. "They couldn't afford that opposition in their communities."

Mr. Solomon said that Dr. Gupta was now benefiting from a more comfortable political environment in which to promote harm reduction, with "a resurgence of research and momentum" behind it.

Dr. Ciccarone, who pushed Dr. Gupta to more vocally support harm reduction after the Charleston syringe exchange was shut down, called him "reformed."

"He sees the beauty of harm reduction, the necessity of harm reduction," he said. "Because crisis times are calling for desperate measures, we need to put all the tools out."

Earlier in his career, Dr. Gupta practiced medicine in Alabama and at a safety net hospital in Nashville, experiences he said had illuminated the social and economic causes of addiction, especially among the poor.

Even now, Dr. Gupta said, many states and cities are only just beginning to have conversations about the benefits of harm reduction. Naloxone can be expensive and hard to find in some parts of the country, he said; in a recent analysis of overdose deaths in 2019 and 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that naloxone had been administered in only about 20 percent of the cases. He is now talking to Food and Drug Administration regulators about allowing naloxone to be sold over the counter, which could improve access and affordability.

He has talked up harm reduction this year in Salt Lake City and in Kentucky, where local health departments across the state have taken up syringe exchange programs.

There are now more than 80 such programs statewide, said Van Ingram, the director of Kentucky's drug control policy office, pointing to it an example of bipartisanship in harm reduction policymaking. Local

health officials, he added, “had to take the uncomfortable positions with the same people they stand in line with at Kroger.”

During a visit to Maine’s state prison this month, Dr. Gupta praised a medication treatment program for opioid addiction, another facet of harm reduction efforts that addiction experts say is critical to stemming overdoses among the incarcerated and after release.

As fentanyl continues to pummel communities, Dr. Gupta says that the Biden administration has adopted a consider-everything attitude. It has moved to loosen restrictions on prescribing [buprenorphine](#), an anti-craving drug. Fentanyl test strips, which can [now be purchased](#) with federal grants, are one tool that should be more widely adopted, Dr. Gupta said, citing cocaine users as an example of who might benefit.

“They don’t know there’s a new contaminant in this,” he said. “And then they’ll die. Is that fair? Is that right?”

A Justice Department decision on supervised consumption — tied to the Philadelphia case — could allow sites to function without fear of interruption by federal authorities. The resolution could also give the White House an opening to publicly endorse the option.

“The Department is evaluating supervised consumption sites, including discussions with state and local regulators about appropriate guardrails for such sites, as part of an overall approach to harm reduction and public safety,” a Justice Department spokeswoman said in a statement.

Dr. Gupta cautioned in interviews that research on supervised consumption sites in the United States was practically nonexistent, as the first authorized sites opened just last November. A [2021 review](#) of 22 studies from other countries found that such sites “may reduce the risk of overdose morbidity and mortality and improve access to care while not increasing crime or public nuisance to the surrounding community.”

Many Republican governors and state legislatures in recent years [grew more receptive](#) to needle exchanges and naloxone as overdose deaths reached once-unthinkable levels. The Trump administration also supported them, as well as [medication-assisted treatment](#), in which users receive less potent opioids under medical supervision to ward off withdrawal symptoms and stanch cravings.

Yet some lawmakers still express discomfort with harm reduction tools, not least fentanyl strips, which are [gaining acceptance](#) even in some conservative states but [remain illegal](#) in others. A recent [uproar](#) about so-called “crack pipes” in a harm reduction grant program showed how the idea still faces deep pockets of resistance and can be weaponized politically. Supervised consumption sites remain a particular lightning rod.

At a recent hearing examining the National Drug Control Strategy, which Mr. Gupta’s office oversees, Senator Charles Grassley, Republican of Iowa, said, “I’m worried that making drugs more accessible is what this administration calls drug control.”

Mr. Grassley [wryly noted](#) that compared to relatively few mentions of counterfeit pills, the phrase “harm reduction” appeared 198 times in the new strategy.

Advocates of harm reduction say that Dr. Gupta still needs to push for more federal grants for such programs and that lawmakers should remove a restriction on using federal money to purchase syringes for needle exchanges.

The [first federal grants](#) for harm reduction groups, a \$30 million program funded by the American Rescue Plan, were a far cry from what is needed to keep organizations afloat, experts said. Not receiving a grant “means we all dedicate a lot of time that could be spent on way more impactful work

	<p>fund-raising for the long list of supplies we can't use state or federal funds for," said Lauren McGinley, the executive director of the New Hampshire Harm Reduction Coalition.</p> <p>Jessica Parnell, who oversees a syringe exchange program in Nashua, said her group relies on <a href="#">charity gaming funds</a> to afford the number of syringes she needs to meet demand. Her group expanded the number of days on which it serves people each week and started offering glassware in safer smoking kits.</p> <p>"It's taken off," she said. "We're reaching populations we haven't before and offering an alternative to injection, which is safer."</p> <p>Kellene Mulcahy operates a harm reduction program out of the trunk of her car in Manchester, with an expanded arsenal she offers to members of the community: sterile water and clean cookers to dissolve illicit drugs, tourniquets and syringes to inject them, condoms, Band-Aids and fentanyl test strips, among other items, she said. The more local and flexible the operation, she said, the better the odds of people returning to it.</p> <p>"They want to be human beings," she said, "regardless of the decisions they're making."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Hotter, longer, widespread China heatwave</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/world/asia/china-heat-wave.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/world/asia/china-heat-wave.html</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING — In western China, runoff from melting glaciers could overwhelm dams, officials have warned. In the southern metropolis of Guangzhou, the government has <a href="#">asked residents to use large appliances less</a> so the electrical grid is not overwhelmed as the city battles its longest heat wave since 1951. In the coastal city of Fuzhou, temperatures exceeded 41 degrees Celsius, or nearly 106 degrees Fahrenheit, for an unprecedented three days in a row, state media reported.</p> <p>More than 900 million Chinese, about 65 percent of the population, are living under some kind of heat warning. Temperatures have reached, or exceeded, the highs that have recently tormented parts of Europe and the United States. Between June and mid-July, officials across the country have issued more than 15,000 high-temperature warnings, including more than 2,000 predicting temperatures would exceed 104 degrees, <a href="#">according to state media</a>. Seventy-one weather stations recorded their highest temperatures ever.</p> <p>China has long suffered from extreme weather in summer, with heat waves accompanied by intense flooding. But the severity of these events has increased in recent years under the effects of global warming. Officials said the heat this year was likely to be more intense and more prolonged. It is expected to persist until at least the end of the month.</p> <p>"The affected area is large, the length of time it will continue is long, and the extremity is strong," Xinhua, the state news agency, <a href="#">said</a>.</p> <p>As elsewhere in the world, the toll has fallen on some of the most vulnerable, including the poor and elderly. Several heat-related deaths have been recorded, some of them construction or factory workers. Videos on social media have shown <a href="#">frontline medical workers</a>, in full-body protective equipment as China continues to try to eliminate the coronavirus, being overwhelmed by the high temperatures.</p> <p>Heat-related deaths in China rose more than fourfold between 1990 and 2019, to 26,800 in 2019, <a href="#">according to a study</a> published in the medical journal The Lancet. Researchers <a href="#">have predicted</a> that the number could more than double if the global temperature rises by 2 degrees Celsius, or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit, noting that China's rapidly aging population would be especially at risk.</p> <p>Some of the highest temperatures recently have been recorded in southeastern China, in the coastal province of Zhejiang. On Tuesday, temperatures in one city there, Lishui, reached nearly 108 degrees. One Zhejiang hospital <a href="#">told reporters from state media</a> that it was admitting heat stroke patients on a daily basis.</p>

	<p>At least one man, a factory worker, died earlier this month after suffering multiple organ failure.</p> <p>But most of the country has been roasting. In the far-western Xinjiang region, local officials <a href="#">warned</a> last week that the melting of snow and ice from mountainous areas would increase the risk of dam failure, and that it had already caused flash floods and mudslides. Earlier this month, an official with the National Meteorological Center said the heat <a href="#">could drain moisture from the soil</a> in Gansu and Shaanxi Provinces, hurting harvests of corn and cotton, and damage rice harvests in the Yangtze River basin.</p> <p>Shanghai, home to 26 million people, reached nearly 106 degrees this month, tying its hottest day since record keeping began in 1873.</p> <p><a href="#">Photos from a zoo</a> in Guangzhou showed a panda lying on a giant slab of ice and several elephants perched atop blocks of their own.</p> <p>Only two provinces, Heilongjiang and Liaoning, both in the far northeast, have not issued heat warnings.</p> <p>A <a href="#">heat wave had already scorched parts of northern China</a> in June, just as heavy flooding displaced millions of people in the central and southwestern parts of the country. The heat receded slightly, only to return with force in the south in recent weeks.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Record: flash floods swamp St Louis area</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/us/flash-flooding-st-louis-missouri.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/us/flash-flooding-st-louis-missouri.html</a>
GIST	<p>Record rainfall triggered flash floods in parts of St. Louis and other areas of Missouri early Tuesday, with reports of rescues from residences and submerged vehicles on swamped roadways, officials said.</p> <p>Jim Sieveking, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in St. Louis, described the rainfall as “historic,” adding that the city’s daily rainfall record, set in August 1915, was broken in five hours.</p> <p>“St. Louis received over seven inches of rain,” he said. “We’ll probably end up with over eight inches of rain by the time the rain tapers off this morning.” Up to 10 inches of rain had been reported in areas northwest of St. Louis, he said.</p> <p>Mr. Sieveking said that heavy rain had caused “catastrophic flash flooding,” with neighborhoods submerged, cars stranded and portions of interstates 70, 64 and 55 closed. He estimated there had been upward of 100 water rescues across the area.</p> <p>The city’s fire department <a href="#">said on Twitter</a> that it was responding to multiple reports of vehicles and people trapped in high water.</p> <p>The flooding inundated roadways, shutting down more than two dozen sections of major roads that crisscross the St. Louis area. including Interstate 170, a beltway that runs north and south, and Interstate 70, which runs east and west across the country, the state <a href="#">Department of Transportation said</a>.</p> <p>At least four state highways and several other major roads were also closed by the flooding, it said.</p> <p>In a residential area on the city’s western edge, rescuers used inflatable boats to reach homes where occupants were trapped, evacuating half a dozen people, while others sheltered in place, in at least 18 homes during one operation, the St. Louis Fire Department said.</p> <p>St. Louis was one of more than a dozen residential areas in Missouri and in neighboring counties in south-central Illinois that were inundated with heavy rainfall overnight.</p>



Residents in St. Charles County, in Missouri's central eastern region, were told to stay home. A county official [told News 4](#), a St. Louis TV station, that emergency dispatchers were overwhelmed with water rescue calls, mostly from the St. Peters and O'Fallon areas.

Flash flood warnings remained in effect for much of the region into early Tuesday afternoon, the [National Weather Service](#) said.

The rain was expected to move out of the region by lunchtime, Mr. Sieveking said, adding that the water is then expected to recede into the larger creeks and the rivers in the area.

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HEADLINE	07/25 China new wave of diplomacy in Africa
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/world/asia/china-diplomacy-africa.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/world/asia/china-diplomacy-africa.html</a>
GIST	<p>Whirlwind visits to crisis-riven nations in Africa. A sleek training center for the continent's up-and-coming politicians. The prospect of major <a href="#">debt forgiveness</a> for a favorite African country.</p> <p>As relations with the United States and Europe plummet, China is starting a new wave of diplomacy in Africa, where it dominates trade with <a href="#">resource-rich nations</a> and keeps friendly ties with mostly authoritarian leaders, <a href="#">unfettered by competition</a> from the West.</p> <p>China's campaign to cultivate African allegiances is part of a great geopolitical competition, which has intensified since the start of the war in Ukraine. Already fiercely vying for loyalties in Asia, Beijing and Washington are now jockeying broadly for influence, with the United States, Europe and their democratic allies positioned against China, Russia, Iran and other autocracies. Heightening the competition, Russia's foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, began a tour of Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo Sunday.</p> <p>In Africa, China is adjusting its approach, more closely integrating financial and diplomatic efforts. It's a recognition that <a href="#">just building</a> new expressways, hydropower dams and skyscrapers — as China has tried to do with the Belt and Road Initiative — isn't sufficient to secure relations.</p> <p>While the initiative across dozens of countries has helped to relegate the United States to a second-tier position in many places, the projects have also amplified tensions and added to a mounting debt crisis. To complement the rails and roads, China's leader, Xi Jinping, started a new Global Security Initiative in the spring, a broad effort to bring developing countries together.</p> <p>A big lender to Africa, Beijing is seeking to protect current and future assets, including demand for the continent's vast minerals. It also wants to make sure its first overseas naval base, in Djibouti at the entrance of the Red Sea, operates smoothly to ensure shipments of oil.</p> <p>China is reaching from Ethiopia, on the strategically important Horn of Africa, to Zambia, a heavily indebted nation with big copper mines, farther south. Beijing is offering to mediate in civil conflicts that are causing devastating famine, and most significantly, it is signaling a new strategy to resolve billions of dollars in overdue Chinese loans.</p> <p>"The United States has been saying it's pivoting to Asia, so there's the perception of an American retreat on the continent," said Murithi Mutiga, project director for the Horn of Africa at International Crisis Group, a research group.</p> <p>"The Chinese have been the main economic partner," he added. "Now they are making a play on the geopolitical sphere as well."</p> <p>Beijing's strategy is financially grounded. Trade between China and the <a href="#">continent topped \$250 billion</a> in 2021, compared with \$64.33 billion for the United States. Chinese companies operating in Africa are investing so quickly in lithium mining that by 2030, China is expected to control 75 percent</p>

of the mineral, which is largely used in electric vehicles, said Henry Sanderson, executive editor of Benchmark Mineral Intelligence.

Building off the economic projects, China is changing its diplomatic messaging. Rather than keeping a distance from thornier issues, it is engaging directly, even if it's not always welcomed.

In January, the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, visited three African countries. His message: China wants to help solve their conflicts, many of them internal conflicts.

In Ethiopia, the fighting between the central government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front has forced two million people from their homes and left parts of the country in famine.

China [appointed Xue Bing](#) as envoy to the Horn of Africa, a new post, in February. Mr. Xue, a former Chinese ambassador to Papua New Guinea, has flown to several countries, including Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan.

In June, Mr. Xue convened the foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers from five nations in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, boasting that China was taking an evenhanded approach to long-term civil conflicts.

The Chinese official was the latest in a line of outside mediators trying to end the conflict or halt the humanitarian catastrophe in Ethiopia, often with little success.

At the first session in Addis Ababa, Mr. Xue said he would be happy to gather the countries again. "I myself am ready to provide mediation efforts," he said. But no new date was set, and Ethiopia, which appeared to be Mr. Xue's major target, did not take up his offer.

China has also promoted its authoritarian model, in contrast to the United States' defense of democracies.

China is an old hand at teaching the virtues of the one-party state to African leaders, a constant theme when Mao Zedong was alive. Now, China is presenting an updated version at a new training school in Tanzania, started by the International Liaison Department, the powerful body within the Communist Party that promotes China's ideology and influence abroad.

Named after Julius Nyerere, the founding president of Tanzania and a stalwart supporter of Mao, the school accepted its first batch of future leaders in June, drawn from political parties in six southern African nations that have ruled without serious challenges since independence.

[At the opening](#), the head of the liaison department, Song Tao, addressed the young politicians by video, urging them to follow the governance model embodied by the Chinese Communist Party.

Looming in the background of China's diplomatic endeavors is debt. Some African nations that signed up to the Belt and Road Initiative are unable to keep up their payments, a crisis compounded by high inflation and depreciating currencies.

China is Zambia's biggest bilateral lender. Beijing has built roads, two airports and a major dam in Zambia, and the country urgently needs to restructure \$6 billion of debt. The International Monetary Fund has told Zambia that unless the China debt issue is resolved, it will not provide a \$1.3 billion bailout package.

China is working with Zambia's new president, Hakainde Hichilema, who won after playing up corruption accusations against former President Edgar Lungu, long favored by China. In one of Mr. Hichilema's first moves, he canceled some Chinese projects.

In December, the Biden administration invited the Zambian president to address its virtual Summit for Democracy, setting up a modicum of competition with Beijing.

Then in May, Mr. Xi spoke by phone with Mr. Hichilema.

“The call reassured Zambia’s new president that the Chinese would come through with a debt relief offer,” said [Deborah Brautigam](#), director of the SAIS China Africa Research Initiative at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

In the past, China has worked on its own — and secretly — with countries on debt relief. That’s in part, Ms. Brautigam said, because many Chinese government entities, as well as companies, hold the debt, complicating efforts to hash out agreements. In Zambia’s case, nearly 20 different Chinese entities are involved, she said.

Western critiques of China’s lending are regularly rebuffed by Chinese officials as unfair and lacking in understanding.

In Zambia’s case, this was particularly true, said Zhao Yongsheng, a finance expert at the University of International Business and Economics, a Chinese research institute. Mr. Zhao worked on an aid project nearly 40 years ago in Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Beijing had deferred Zambia’s debt payments on about \$1 billion in loans over the last two years, giving special consideration for the pandemic, Mr. Zhao said.

“The Chinese are actually more able to understand the difficulties and problems faced by African countries such as Zambia, before and now, than European countries and the United States,” he said.

Last month, under pressure from multilateral financial institutions, China participated for the first time in a meeting with the Paris Club of creditor nations to start resolving Zambia’s debt issue. The solution is expected to either extend the period of payment for Zambia or reduce the value of the loan for China.

In a move aimed at mediating the squabbles among the myriad Chinese lenders, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now involved in the process. A new Chinese ambassador in Zambia, Du Xiaohui, is promoting a swift resolution, Ms. Brautigam said.

If the Zambia debt crisis is handled more openly, China could burnish its image and African countries with huge loans could benefit, said Gyude Moore, a former minister of public works in Liberia and now an analyst at the Center for Global Development in Washington. It could “usher in a period of normalization of debt.”

In the face of looming debt crises across Africa, he added, “this is a big deal.”

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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Pope begs forgiveness for ‘evil’ Christians</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/25/world/pope-francis-canada-visit">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/25/world/pope-francis-canada-visit</a>
GIST	<p>MASKWACIS, Alberta — Pope Francis offered a sweeping apology to Indigenous people on their native land in Canada on Monday, fulfilling a critical demand of many of the survivors of church-run residential schools that became gruesome centers of abuse, forced assimilation, cultural devastation and death for over a century.</p> <p>“I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous peoples,” Francis said to a large crowd of Indigenous people, some wearing traditional clothing and headdresses, in Maskwacis, Alberta, the site of a former residential school.</p>

The pope made his apology in a pow wow circle, a covered ring surrounding an open space used for traditional dancing and drumming circles. Around it were teepees, campfires, and booths labeled “Mental Health and Cultural Support.”

Francis, who arrived at the event being pushed in a wheelchair, added that his remarks were intended for “every Native community and person” and said that a feeling of “shame” had lingered since he apologized to representatives of Indigenous people in April at the Vatican.

He said he was “deeply sorry” — a remark that triggered applause and approving shouts — for the ways in which “many Christians supported the colonizing mentality of the powers that oppressed the Indigenous peoples.”

“I am sorry,” he continued. “I ask forgiveness, in particular, for the ways in which many members of the church and of religious communities cooperated, not least through their indifference, in projects of cultural destruction and forced assimilation promoted by the governments of that time, which culminated in the system of residential schools.”

Those schools separated children from parents; inflicted physical, sexual and mental abuse; erased languages; and used Christianity as a weapon to break the cultures, and communities, of Indigenous people. Christian churches operated most of the schools for the government with Catholic orders responsible for running 60 to 70 percent of the roughly 130 schools, where thousands of children died.

Francis said it was “right to remember” on the site of such traumas, even at the risk of opening old wounds.

“It is necessary to remember how the policies of assimilation and enfranchisement, which also included the residential school system, were devastating for the people of these lands,” he said, adding, “I thank you for making me appreciate this.”

He called the abuses often carried out with missionary zeal, a “disastrous error” that eroded the people, their culture and values.

Francis also said that “begging pardon is not the end of the matter,” adding that he “fully” agreed with skeptics who wanted actions. And he said that he hoped for further investigations and that “concrete ways” could be found to help survivors begin a path toward healing and reconciliation.

After delivering his speech, which he offered in Spanish and which was translated into English, Chief Wilton Littlechild of the Ermineskin Cree Nation, who had introduced the pope, fitted him with a headdress, its white feathers standing over his white robes. The crowd erupted in applause.

When Francis had finished his remarks, many who had listened said they were satisfied with his apology.

“It was genuine and it was good,” said Cam Bird, 42, a residential school survivor from Little Red River reserve in Saskatchewan. “He believes us.”

But others were still taking stock of what had just happened after so many generations of devastation and trauma.

“I haven’t really digested it yet,” said Barb Morin, 64, from Île-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan, whose parents suffered in residential schools and who wore a shirt reading “Residential School Survivors Never Forgotten.” “I’m having a really hard time internalizing this right now.”

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HEADLINE	07/26 Council: Seattle is abortion ‘sanctuary city’
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-police-wont-make-arrests-on-abortion-related-charges-after-city-council-establishes-sanctuary-city/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-police-wont-make-arrests-on-abortion-related-charges-after-city-council-establishes-sanctuary-city/</a>
GIST	<p>Seattle police will not cooperate in arrests or investigations related to abortion bans in other states, after City Council members voted to make the city a sanctuary for providers and patients.</p> <p>The bill, which <a href="#">Councilmember Kshama Sawant introduced at a news conference</a> the day the U.S. Supreme Court repealed decades-old constitutional protections over abortion, deems Seattle a “sanctuary city” for those who seek or provide abortion.</p> <p>While abortion has been and remains legal across Washington state, the new legislation prohibits Seattle police from arresting people on warrants issued in other jurisdictions or aiding in investigations related to seeking or performing abortions, following the model of Seattle’s Initiative 75, which similarly stopped the Seattle Police Department from pursuing charges based on cannabis, which remains federally illegal.</p> <p>“Laws violating basic bodily autonomy and criminalizing reproductive health care are fundamentally unjust and we should not allow Seattle to be complicit,” Sawant said on Tuesday, touting the support of 5,500 community members who signed a petition in support of the legislation.</p> <p>“Let anyone frightened by draconian anti-abortion laws come to Seattle without fear of prosecution,” she added.</p> <p>The bill was approved by all six present members of the council and after Sawant proposed an amendment to remove the phrase “provided by a licensed health care provider operating within the scope of their practice,” broadening protections to include those who seek unlicensed care.</p> <p>“The reality is the states that have passed draconian anti-abortion laws also make it impossible to be licensed to provide reproductive health care. And as a result, people are forced to find other illegal ways to do the same thing,” Sawant said.</p> <p>While Mayor Bruce Harrell said in June that Seattle police would not pursue related arrests “that are inconsistent with Washington laws and most important our values,” Sawant’s is the first concrete protection established in the city since the court decision.</p> <p>The council will also soon consider a <a href="#">pair of bills introduced last week by Councilmembers Lisa Herbold and Tammy Morales</a>, designed to protect those seeking abortion care from discrimination and penalize people who interfere with health care, including abortions and gender-affirming care.</p> <p>“I’m really looking forward to working to find ways to expand abortion access and protect what can only be called medical refugees, people who are coming here and cannot receive basic health care in their home states,” Herbold said Tuesday.</p> <p>Herbold and Morales’ bills were both approved in committee on Friday and are set to be voted on by the full council on Aug. 9.</p> <p>Sawant said she hopes Seattle is setting the example of how to protect those denied reproductive health care in other states, noting that council members in Minneapolis and Chicago had reached out, indicating their intent to pass similar policies.</p> <p>“If this legislation passes in Seattle alone, it will have a vital impact on protecting many women and LGBTQ people. However, if bringing it here can help it spread to other cities and states, the impact could be truly profound,” Sawant said before the vote.</p> <p>“If half the states in the nation refused to extradite people under investigation for breaking anti-abortion laws in the other half of states, those laws would become extremely difficult to enforce.”</p>

	Last month, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee <a href="#">joined a three-state pact</a> to refuse nonfugitive extradition for individuals facing criminal prosecution for receiving reproductive health care services and expand access to abortion care.
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Seattle Fire urges caution on water</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/heat-wave-begins-seattle-agencies-urging-caution-on-water/281-78daa665-7fb1-4e69-beb5-3d9f9c551b85">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/heat-wave-begins-seattle-agencies-urging-caution-on-water/281-78daa665-7fb1-4e69-beb5-3d9f9c551b85</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — More people will be getting into the water to cool off this week, and the <a href="#">Seattle Fire Department</a> is among the agencies urging everyone to keep safety in mind.</p> <p>On Monday, Fiorella Rietti and her family, visiting from Portland, made the East Green Lake Beach a vacation destination. When they arrived, the sun was shining, and temperatures were in the 80s. They were also greeted by a sign that said, "No Lifeguard on Duty."</p> <p>Seattle Parks and Recreation reports a <a href="#">lifeguard shortage</a> is the reason why. Last month the agency said it had less than 200 lifeguards, and needs more than double that to staff the city's nine beaches and ten pools. "People are still going to enjoy water with or without lifeguards," said Lt. Dan Johanns.</p> <p>Lt. Johanns is one of the Seattle Fire Department's 40 rescue divers.</p> <p>"Our program has been in existence for five years, and we've had five legitimate, viable saves during that time," he said.</p> <p>University of Washington Medicine said 29 people drowned last year in just King County alone.</p> <p>"Please use all due caution and always swim with a buddy, always be careful. If you ever see anybody that's in distress, please call 911 right away," said Lt. Johanns.</p> <p>"I grew up in the water and I really respect the water because honestly, it's like it there's undercurrent, you can get swept in," said Rietti.</p> <p>She said everyone in her family must wear life jackets in the water, and both of her kids know how to swim.</p> <p>Seattle Fire also recommends swimming lessons for anyone who needs to learn. The city offers <a href="#">programs</a>, but those swimming lessons can fill up fast.</p> <p>If the community wants to support the department's Rescue Swimmer program, they can <a href="#">donate</a> to the Seattle Fire Foundation.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Seattle glass repair shops slammed by work</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/glass-repair-businesses-slammed-with-orders-due-to-increases-in-crime">https://www.q13fox.com/news/glass-repair-businesses-slammed-with-orders-due-to-increases-in-crime</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - With <a href="#">acts of vandalism, arson and theft</a> on track to match levels seen in 2021 in the city of Seattle, glass repair businesses and technicians are doing their best to keep up with orders.</p> <p>So far in 2022, <a href="#">Seattle police say that more than 22,000 property crimes have been reported</a> in the city.</p> <p>One technician reported seeing a 400% increase in calls for board-up service over pre-pandemic levels. Brian Perkins, owner of Perkins Glass on Capitol Hill, said that repair shops are slammed due to both a <a href="#">rise in vandalism</a> and a shortage of skilled workers.</p>



"Very common in the city of Seattle nowadays with all the break-ins, not only safety glass, but it's a security glass as well," said Perkins. "There is no doubt that the vandalism in the city has gone through the roof and that has increased dramatically."

Perkins said the number of calls per day varies, but for the most part, they are booked up weekly with a backlog.

"We could get a jewelry store in Tacoma. There are days we won't get off Capitol Hill because there is so much work on Capitol Hill," said Perkins. "Business has been crazy and not just for us here at Perkins Glass, [but] everyone in the glass industry and field here in Seattle, I think, has been overwhelmed."

Just this weekend, FOX 13 [obtained security video from the owner of Pink Gorilla Games](#), showing a thief breaking into the business for the second time in just the past two weeks. The owner called Glass Doctor to help repair the broken glass.

Kristina DeFelice, the general manager of Glass Doctor of Western Washington, said her crews average around 15 to 18 board-ups a week. She went on to say that there is no such thing as a "bad neighborhood" anymore, adding that technicians are seeing the break-ins happening everywhere.

"It's always a sad thing to come to someone's business and see their property destroyed," said Perkins. Perkins said his business has also seen an uptick in calls for windows needing repairs that have bullet holes in them. Citywide, Seattle Police reported that so far this year, the calls [regarding shots fired and shootings are up 54% over 2021](#).

"Not only is there a high volume of work, but there aren't a whole bunch of people to go out and put the glass in," Perkins explained.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 EU deal: cut natural gas use 15%</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/26/world/ukraine-russia-war#eu-russia-ukraine-gas-deal">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/26/world/ukraine-russia-war#eu-russia-ukraine-gas-deal</a>
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS — European Union energy ministers on Tuesday hammered out a deal to curb their natural gas consumption, finding enough common political ground for a quick compromise intended to avert an energy meltdown as Russia toys with the union's fuel supplies.</p> <p>The agreement provides exemptions to nations that face particular energy problems or have been diligent in saving more gas than they needed in recent months. But it still calls on all nations to voluntarily cut their natural gas consumption by 15 percent between now and spring.</p> <p>Nations in the bloc will have to agree that there's a broader energy supply emergency to make the measures mandatory.</p> <p>The agreement came less than 24 hours after Russia's state-owned gas monopoly, Gazprom, said that it would further reduce the amount of natural gas it sends to Germany through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline. <a href="#">Limited flows</a> resumed less than a week ago after an annual maintenance shutdown.</p> <p>The compromise, though softer than the original proposal, signified an important step in managing the bloc's dependence on Russian energy and the vulnerabilities it breeds as the Kremlin tries to punish Europe for its support of Ukraine. It also highlighted the continued ability of the European Union to forge agreement and overcome divisions in the face of continued threats from President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.</p> <p>"Today, the E.U. has taken a decisive step to face down the threat of a full gas disruption by Putin," the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, said in a statement soon after the agreement was reached.</p>

Unanimity was not required to pass the proposal, but only one of the 27 member states did not ultimately support the compromise, according to diplomats involved in the process. The single country to vote against it was Hungary, which has emerged as a spoiler in the latest round of critical votes on topics relating to Ukraine.

The European Commission's original proposal last week presented a less flexible plan to [urgently cut use of the fuel across the bloc](#), suggesting that savings would keep all 27 members afloat should the Kremlin turn off the taps, ensuring that no single E.U. nation would face a crisis. But it foresaw fewer exceptions, and put the Commission itself in charge of calling an emergency and triggering mandatory natural gas curbs.

European Commission proposals are usually maximalist, though, and take into account the process of dilution that usually ensues when E.U. countries, each with their particular needs, begin debating them. Ms. von der Leyen said that by acting together — and accounting for the energy challenges facing individual nations — the E.U. had “secured the strong foundations for the indispensable solidarity between member states in the face of Putin's energy blackmail.

The rationale behind asking countries that are less dependent on Russian gas to equally share the burden of cutting consumption is that the European Union's economy is highly integrated and a blow to one member can harm them all.

That is especially true, when one of the most vulnerable economies belongs to Germany — the bloc's de facto leader, one of the world's leading industrialized nations and a major buyer of Russian natural gas.

Russia has been slow to restore the supply of gas through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which connects Russia and Germany and was [offline for several days](#) this month for maintenance.

The flow of Russian gas, which supplies 40 percent of the E.U.'s consumption, was less than one-third the normal average in June. Gas storage facilities in Europe, normally almost full at this point in the year in preparation for winter, are not sufficiently stocked to deal with such volatility and shortages.

The compromise plan will exempt Ireland, Cyprus and Malta, two island nations with little flexibility to seek alternative energy sources, as well as the Baltic States that have electricity grids connected to Russia's, an [official statement](#) summarizing the deal said in describing the reasons for the exemptions.

Because several E.U. countries — including Poland, Greece and Spain — with more modest consumption and adequate stocks saw a uniform reduction of use as unfair, the plan also spells out other grounds for more modest consumption reductions. For example, countries that have overshot their storage-filling target can compensate by cutting their use less.

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HEADLINE	07/25 Ukraine recruits new soldiers, but how?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/world/middleeast/ukraine-soldiers-recruitment-draft.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/world/middleeast/ukraine-soldiers-recruitment-draft.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article</a>
GIST	<p>KHARKIV, Ukraine — At a subway station, a recruiting officer named Oleksandr, one of dozens deployed to different spots around Kharkiv, pulled young men out of the crowd recently, checking documents and determining whether they were eligible for military service.</p> <p>A nationwide campaign is underway in Ukraine to recruit, register and draft men — a predictable response for a country at war. That campaign includes fanning out on the streets to find potential soldiers and issuing summonses ordering them to report to recruiting offices.</p>

But the effort, especially the street recruiting, is drawing accusations that it is secretive and arbitrary, that it violates the government's own rules and that it sometimes drafts the unwilling while spurning the willing. It has also led to a cat-and-mouse game between recruiters and men trying to avoid them.

Recruiters like Oleksandr, who did not give his full name because he was not authorized to speak to the media, say they issue summonses to register only to those who want to fight. "We ask them, do they have military training and do they want to serve in the war?" he said.

But some of those on the receiving end say they were never given a choice about appearing, while there are reports of men who are eager to fight being turned away, for reasons that appear bureaucratic in nature.

A [petition signed by more than 25,000](#) Ukrainians, the threshold for requiring President Volodymyr Zelensky to respond, requests a ban on issuing summonses at checkpoints, gas stations and other public places. It asks him to establish a transparent process for when people might be called up.

"There are many willing people who are motivated, who have combat experience, but cannot join the service, because in many places they recruited people precisely on the streets who do not have experience," the petition read.

Denis, 29, said he was recently handed a summons he did not want outside a Kharkiv supermarket. But at the recruitment office, "I lied and said I didn't have any military training," he recalled — a lie that may not be caught because his records are in a different part of Ukraine. Denis, who did not want his last name to be published for fear of punishment, added, "I know guys who don't even leave their apartments because they're afraid to get a summons, but I also know a lot of people who want to fight."

Ukraine has long had conscription, and young men are required to do military service unless they fall into an exempt category, like being enrolled in a university, having a disability or having at least three children. After the war began, all nonexempt men ages 18 to 60 were required to register with their local recruitment offices and undergo medical screening for possible service, but at times enforcement and record-keeping have been haphazard.

Government officials say that only those with military experience or specifically needed skills have been drafted so far, but that others are likely to be called up as the war continues. Critics say that conscription has not been as selective as officials make it out to be, and that with the military in charge of recruitment, registration and drafting, the process is shrouded in secrecy, with little transparency about the standards applied to each step.

"This process of handing out summonses fully complies with the law," said Yevheniia Riabeka, former legal adviser to the commander in chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. "This is a normal attempt to register citizens who are obligated to defend their country."

Each local recruitment center is given targets for numbers of people to register, she said — but those figures are "completely secret information."

Andrii Novak, a lawyer who represents people trying to be excused from service, drew a distinction between a summons sent by a recruitment office because its records showed that a person should register and one filled out by a recruiter who stopped someone on the street. He said his firm, Miller Law Firm, considers the latter illegal.

In Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city by population, a [channel on the messaging app Telegram](#) provides anonymous, crowdsourced, real-time information on the locations of recruiters for people trying to steer clear of them. It has more than 67,000 subscribers.

"Our goal is to prevent the inappropriate issuance of summonses," reads the channel description. It invites residents to send in locations and photos of police officers and recruiters.

One post featured a picture, taken from inside a parked car, of recruiters in front of a shop. The caption read, “It’s our old friends.”

Another Telegram channel for the Lviv region in Western Ukraine reads: “It is important to get all the relevant information. Only by knowing your rights, you can protect yourself and your family!” The channel lists the five places where the most summonses are handed out and the diseases that keep men from serving. It also explains how to refuse a summons.

Ukrainians have shown remarkable solidarity, with hundreds of thousands volunteering for the regular army, for the Territorial Defense Forces — akin to the National Guard, with some units deployed in combat — or to work in civilian defense activities. But the numbers have not been enough to match the Russians’ battlefield strength — or to keep up with casualties, which officials have said peaked this spring at 100 killed and almost 400 wounded daily.

There are also signs, five grueling months into the war, that the sense of unity is fraying at the edges. Soldiers, including minimally prepared raw recruits, have done long, hard service, while others have managed to stay far from it.

Volodymyr Marchenko, 48, a farmer, has served five months in a Territorial Defense battalion, often at or near the front lines, without his unit being relieved. He knew how to shoot a hunting rifle and enlisted immediately when the invasion began.

Sent to fight in street clothes and ordinary shoes, he sustained frostbite on his toes.

“There is no one to replace us,” he said. “There are too few people. It’s very hard for the guys psychologically.”

There is also disillusionment with a system that turns away some who want to fight, while taking in others who are unwilling and unqualified.

“There are a lot of guys who have a lot of motivation and ability, who want to join the army now, but they don’t take them,” said a senior soldier in a Territorial Defense unit, who requested anonymity to speak candidly.

The lack of public transparency about the recruitment system, a major complaint of its critics, makes it difficult to tell how and why people are recruited. For the most part, though, bureaucratic or logistical factors — such as some units’ lacking available slots for officers or soldiers — seem to be behind why some with relevant skills or experience are not accepted for service.

On the opposite side, some commanders and senior soldiers say summoning men unwilling to serve is lowering morale among those who volunteered.

Last month, the Kyiv police chief, Ivan Vyhivskiy, said that police and military commissars [raided two nightclubs that were violating curfew](#) and issued 219 summonses for military registration to men they found there.

That drew a sharp response from a senior sergeant of the 47th Armed Forces Battalion in a [Facebook post this month](#).

“I am proud of my military service and I am outraged that my profession is being reduced to the level of punishment for these scumbags,” wrote the sergeant, Valeriy Markus. “It’s humiliating.”

He wrote that soldiers and officers who put their lives on the line were demoralized by a chaotic recruitment process that drew draftees with poor qualifications or little inclination to serve. Sergeant Markus said he had personally faced situations where draftees’ alcoholism or other problems endangered other soldiers’ lives.

“It is impossible to get rid of them, or use force — they will sue,” he wrote.

Sergeant Markus, identified in a Ukrainian defense industry posting as part of the leadership of the 47th Battalion, declined to be interviewed.

In Kharkiv, only 25 miles from the Russian border, Oleksandr, the recruitment officer, said he was looking for unregistered men with military training. If they say they are not interested, he lets them go, he said.

Some, he recalled, shouted at him. “They say: ‘I don’t want to serve! Ukraine isn’t even a real country!’” He attributed a small thread of pro-Russian feeling in this region, bordering Russia, to what he called mental health problems from the frequent shelling the city has endured.

Oleksandr said that after the Kharkiv recruitment office was leveled by Russian airstrikes early in the war, military recruiters there no longer had records of who had registered and needed to recreate their database.

Mr. Zelensky has said he wants to field one million men in the military effort. That figure is reported to be at about 700,000, including Territorial Defense fighters, some of whom have been deployed to combat.

Millions of Ukrainians, displaced from the war-torn eastern and southern regions, are living in Western Ukraine, close to the Polish border, including many military-age men who have not signed up.

Last month the military chief of staff caused an uproar by issuing instructions indicating that military-age men needed to register when moving between provinces. After criticism from Mr. Zelensky that the military could not make such a move unilaterally, it clarified that it was simply asking citizens to inform the authorities if they were moving to a different region.

“Dear citizens,” read the notice. “I remind you, the war is going on. Your country needs you!”

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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 War sends prices soaring in Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/business/inflation-ukraine-war-prices.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/business/inflation-ukraine-war-prices.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article</a>
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine — At his compact stall in Lviv’s main outdoor food market, Ihor Korpil arranged jars of blueberries that he and his wife had picked from a nearby forest into an attractive display. Fragrant dill and fresh peas harvested from their garden lay in neat piles on a table.</p> <p>A schoolteacher surviving on modest pay, Mr. Korpil peddles produce during summers to supplement his family’s income. But this year, he has had to raise prices by over 10 percent to make up for a surge in fuel and fertilizer costs brought on by Russia’s invasion. Now, buyers are scarce, and sales have slumped by more than half.</p> <p>“War has driven up the cost of almost everything, and people are buying much, much less,” Mr. Korpil said, pointing with weather-beaten hands to a heap of unsold carrots. “Everyone, including us, is tightening their belts,” he added. “They’re trying to save money because they don’t know what the future will bring.”</p> <p>Since Russia invaded Ukraine, food, energy and commodity prices have <a href="#">climbed around the world</a>, worsening global inflation and inflicting financial hardship on millions of vulnerable people.</p> <p>Few countries are feeling the bite as much as Ukraine itself, where Russia’s deadly campaign of attrition is piling economic havoc atop a devastating humanitarian toll.</p> <p>Prices here have <a href="#">jumped more than 21 percent</a> from a year ago, one of the highest rates on the continent, as Russian <a href="#">attacks on critical infrastructure</a> and <a href="#">Russian occupation</a> of major industrial and agriculture-</p>

producing regions in the southeast sow chaos in supply chains. Fuel prices are up 90 percent from a year ago, while food costs have surged over 35 percent, according to the National Bank of Ukraine.

The economy is expected to [contract by over a third](#) this year, and the government has warned that it faces a fiscal shortfall of over \$5 billion a month because of the war. Ukraine narrowly avoided a sovereign [debt default last week](#).

While international institutions have provided nearly \$13 billion in financing for Ukraine, the support is going only so far: The central bank has [devalued the hryvnia](#), the country's currency, by 25 percent against the U.S. dollar to head off a financial crisis — a move that will make many goods even more costly.

That is hardly welcome news for businesses like CSAD-Yavoriv, a family-run trucking company that transports commercial goods, as well as vital grain and humanitarian supplies, in Ukraine and across European borders.

Trucks have become critical for transport after Russia blocked Ukrainian ports and bombed train tracks. The price of fuel has tripled since the invasion in February, in part because Russia also destroyed numerous Ukrainian fuel depots, said Marichka Ustymenko, the company's deputy director.

Filling a truck's fuel tank now costs around 850 euros (about \$870), up from €300 before the war, Ms. Ustymenko said, and manufacturers are passing that increased shipping cost onto products from diapers to furniture. Import prices have likewise surged because of the devalued national currency, squeezing Ukrainians who are struggling to get by.

"The cost of products is so high, but people's salaries have stayed the same," Ms. Ustymenko said. Humanitarian aid shipped into Ukraine on her company's trucks poured in at the start of the war, helping to offset some of the pain. But that has slowed to a trickle, she added.

Not everyone is hard hit. At the Citadel, an upscale hilltop hotel in Lviv, the parking lot was filled with Mercedes-Benzes and other luxury cars owned by wealthy Ukrainians on a recent day. People working in the country's [thriving tech sector](#) also have abundant work.

But for older people with fixed pensions and millions of Ukrainians who have been displaced or whose salaries or jobs have been cut, finances are being squeezed.

Lviv, a [UNESCO world heritage site](#) that was a major draw for tourists before the war, has been spared heavy Russian attacks, attracting a flood of internally displaced Ukrainians. Rents have shot up in cities considered to be safe, while the price of furniture and electronics has jumped as Ukrainians who fled the country start to return.

The war has most noticeably pushed up food prices. A so-called [Borscht index](#), which measures the cost of ingredients used to make Ukraine's national dish, was up 43 percent in June from a year ago. Russian occupation of rich agricultural regions has delayed harvests of beets — the key ingredient in borscht — and other vegetables, nearly tripling the cost of some produce.

On a cobbled street in Lviv's historic heart, [Borsch](#), a cafe once packed with moneyed European visitors, is struggling to manage. After Russia invaded, the cafe's owners poured money into making 300 free servings of borscht a day for Lviv's soldiers, said Yuliya Levytsko, a manager.

Today, many patrons are displaced Ukrainians on a budget, so the cafe has raised prices for the garnet-colored soup by much less than it costs to make it.

Ms. Levytsko said her own family had cut back to basics.



Her home grocery bill takes up about three-quarters of her modest monthly salary, up from just over half before the war. The gas bill for her husband's car has jumped nearly 30 percent. Both are looking for a second job, and Ms. Levytsko now records every penny they spend.

"We don't know what our situation will be tomorrow," Ms. Levytsko said, adding that many Ukrainians were saving to brace for what they fear could be a hard winter, with fuel and food prices rising even more.

Back at the outdoor food market, butchers stood behind refrigerated cases heaped with meat, waiting for customers. Prices for beef, pork, chicken and dairy, sourced from farms in western Ukraine that have remained largely untouched by Russian strikes, had risen only modestly. Even so, business was slow.

"Prices for these products aren't higher, but people are cutting back sharply," said Lesia, a meat seller at the market for 20 years, who, like many older Ukrainians, was reluctant to give her full name for fear of drawing attention. "Still, we can't give up," she said. "After all the things Russia's done to us, we will never give up."

Stalls that used to be run by vegetable and meat producers from Kharkiv and Kherson lay dark, shuttered after their owners were driven out of business by Russia's invasion.

Yoroslava Ilhytska, a cheese seller, gazed at the once-bustling counters of her missing neighbors, bare save for an old weighing scale gathering dust. "They were bombed out," she said. "They lost all their goods and a factory, so they had to close."

Pungent spices, dark chocolates and dried figs perfumed the air from brimming plastic bins nearby. Such delicacies, imported from Turkey, Chile and Azerbaijan, were less sought after and more costly because of the war, said Oksana, a stall keeper who would give only her first name.

Dried dates used to be imported directly from Turkey through the Black Sea, reaching her stall in days. With Russia's blockade of the Black Sea ports, the dates now take more than a week to move overland through Europe before crossing into western Ukraine, and cost up to a third more.

"You can see the impact: Only two people have bought anything in the last half an hour," Oksana said, surveying the near-empty walkways between the stalls. "People can live without my products: They are not a first necessity. Cabbage, cucumbers, dairy — those are," she said.

"The war has impacted us catastrophically," added Oksana, who said she spent much of her time looking for ways to keep her spirits up. Her face brightened as she described finding joy in making scented homemade soaps, perfumed with flowers and spices. But the rising price of oils and other raw materials had limited her hobby.

Her smile dissolved into a steely gaze. "We are all struggling," Oksana said. "If we only could, we would tear the enemy to pieces with our bare hands."

"But as long as there is even one Ukrainian left standing," she continued, "they will never win."

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HEADLINE	07/26 Tacoma transfers landmark to feds for \$1
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article263803583.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article263803583.html</a>
GIST	<p>The city of Tacoma is transferring ownership of Union Station and the federal courthouse property to the U.S. government for a grand sum of \$1, closing a long chapter in preserving the 111-year-old property.</p> <p>While the news may come as a surprise to some, the deal has been contractually set for decades as part of the city's lease agreement with the U.S. government.</p>

According to the city's July 19 action memo explaining the transfer: "This resolution is the result of a contractual obligation and there will not be any community engagement or customer research."

It added, "This transfer will allow GSA to continue to maintain the historic building as a federal courthouse."

The city's 30-year lease gave the federal government the option to buy the site for a dollar, which in 2002, U.S. General Services Administration confirmed it would execute.

The properties, 1703 and 1717 Pacific Ave., are set to transfer over to the U.S. government when the deal closes in the coming weeks.

"The transaction will close once the transfer deed has been fully executed by all necessary parties and recorded," Maria Lee, media representative for the city, told The News Tribune on Monday via email. "Typically closings usually occur within one to two months."

#### LONG ROAD OF RECOVERY

As The News Tribune reported covering Union Station's centennial in 2011, "Its terrazzo tile floors have felt the soles of President Warren G. Harding, mobster Machine Gun Kelly, magician Harry Houdini, baseball great Babe Ruth and jazz artist Ella Fitzgerald, amid legions of rail passengers."

It added that not all history made at the station had been great.

"During World War II, the depot saw the tears of Japanese Americans and immigrants as they departed for incarceration at assembly centers and internment camps," the paper reported.

By the 1960s, passenger rail traffic had dwindled considerably.

In 1974, Union Station was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1980, the seven-block area surrounding Union Station was designated a historic district and also listed in the National Register of Historic Places, according to GSA's site timeline.

The last passenger train departed from the station in 1984.

The site fell into significant disrepair following its glory days as a bustling station. Chunks of plaster fell from the dome's interior, and thieves stripped the building of its brass handrails and classic light fixtures.

As the story goes, a News Tribune reader wrote a letter to the editor suggesting that the federal and local governments remodel the depot into a federal courthouse. That letter was forwarded by the newspaper's publisher to U.S. Rep. Norm Dicks, and many negotiations later, a complex series of agreements made plans a reality.

In the late 1980s, Congress authorized GSA to arrange for a 30-year lease of the building from Tacoma as the city purchased the site from Burlington Northern in 1988 for \$1, plus \$3.9 million for two adjoining parcels of land. The City of Tacoma issued bonds to finance the restoration on a guarantee that the federal government would pay rent. The state contributed \$3.5 million to stabilize the landmark and refurbish the copper dome. The hope was to turn the site around and, in turn, spark an economic and development revival in that part of downtown.

Construction commenced in 1990 for restoration and expansion.

"Rent for the facility was calculated at \$35.06 per net usable square foot per year which equates to \$4,051,568.66 per year," Lee told The News Tribune. "This rental amount was based on the bond/debt service for the original cost to acquire, construct, and rehabilitate the property."

It was a slog to get to the finish line, and not without a fair share of drama, including a prediction of cost overruns due to cleanup of pollutants found on site and changes in the design requested by federal judges and GSA.

The city also fretted over delays that were costing the city \$10,000 a day in getting the courts moved in and upsetting the fiscal balancing act of the bond interest payments.

“A top official for the General Services Administration, which will act as the property manager for the building, initially said the judges wouldn’t move in until the last bit of sawdust was swept up. The official, Bob Eberly, also cited some scratched woodwork,” The News Tribune reported in early September 1992.

Federal courts eventually moved into the renovated and expanded U.S. courthouse that year, and the Washington State History Museum opened in the new building adjacent to U.S. District Courthouse/Union Station in 1996. A permanent campus for University of Washington Tacoma opened across from the site in 1997, and in 2002, the Museum of Glass and the adjoining Chihuly Bridge of Glass opened nearby. A year later, the new home of the Tacoma Art Museum opened at 1701 Pacific Ave.

In 2017, Tacoma-born international glass artist Dale Chihuly and his wife, Leslie, formally donated five large Chihuly artworks inside the historic rotunda to the federal government, to keep on site in perpetuity as part of the National Fine Arts Collection.

#### WHAT’S NEXT

Christi Chidester Votisek, GSA public affairs officer for the Northwest/Arctic region, told The News Tribune via email in response to questions that unlike the recent GSA sale of federal property in Auburn, Union Station is a keeper.

“GSA has no plans to sell the historic Tacoma Union Station once it has been purchased from the City of Tacoma,” Votisek wrote. “We are thrilled to add the property to the federal real estate portfolio this year and we look forward to maintaining the property as a U.S. courthouse for years to come.”

In contrast, “The federal property in Auburn was identified for sale under the Federal Assets Sale Transfer Act, due to its underutilization. Union Station is fully occupied,” she noted. Union Station is listed in GSA’s 2023 five-year capital budget request “demonstrating that GSA not only intends to keep the property, but to invest in building and system upgrades,” Votisek added.

Public access remains in place at the site, home to the U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington and U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Western District of Washington.

“The U.S. Marshals Service maintains secure access to the courthouse portion of the property. Members of the public may access the historic rotunda and the lower level concourse during business hours Monday through Friday 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.,” Votisek wrote.

Betsy Kruger, general counsel for GSA speaking at the July 17 council meeting, said that the agency “doesn’t have any plans to make any changes to the use of the building. The only thing that I think we will be doing as soon as we’re able to get funding is we’ll be upgrading different systems in the building to bring it up to federal code, because there are some things in the building that are not up to our federal code.

“But as far as use in the surrounding area, I am not aware of any changes,” she added.

GSA is holding a public open house event from 2 to 4 p.m. Aug. 10 in celebration of Union Station joining the federal real estate portfolio.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/how-seattle-schools-are-being-affected-by-dwindling-enrollment/">https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/how-seattle-schools-are-being-affected-by-dwindling-enrollment/</a>
GIST	<p>John Hay Elementary School used to have an assistant principal and enough funds from Seattle Public Schools to hire a reading specialist to assist struggling students.</p> <p>Then the pandemic hit. Last year, the Queen Anne school enrolled 38% fewer students than it did before COVID-19. As a result, a third of its teachers were reassigned to other schools.</p> <p>Student enrollment in Seattle Schools <a href="#">has continued to dwindle the past two years</a>; in the fall, the district is projecting its smallest number of students in seven years. Even before the pandemic, the district had anticipated drops in enrollment because of a decline in birthrates, but officials said the pandemic sped up enrollment losses.</p> <p>Dropping enrollment can have devastating effects because schools must cut staff if they aren't needed, leading to tough choices about which teachers stay and which are transferred. SPS shuffles staff around annually to reflect enrollment changes, but usually those changes are minor from year to year.</p> <p>"For students and families, I think it's really stressful for them," said Nicole Silver, John Hay's principal. "The students are attached to their teachers, and maybe their younger sibling had the same teacher for third grade and they were hoping to have that teacher."</p> <p>Many of the educators that were transferred to other schools were newer teachers because of seniority, Silver said. "It's been really hard because it's really nice to have a mix in the building."</p> <p>Prior to the pandemic, the school in Queen Anne had more than 500 students, Silver said. "It was bursting at the seams," she said. "We had portables, we had really crowded classes, at one point a classroom was on a stage."</p> <p>But over the past three school years, John Hay lost about 200 students.</p> <p>Some schools have lost teachers "because they didn't have enough enrollment to justify the number of staff," said Vivian Song Maritz, Seattle School Board member. "The change has been around specialists and maybe in some instances special education teachers — it really depends on the individual school."</p> <p>The Seattle Education Association held <a href="#">a rally in October</a> protesting the changes the district made to special education staff in certain schools. Although no teachers have lost their jobs yet, some schools have fewer special education teachers and instructional aides.</p> <p>School districts receive funds from the state for every student enrolled. Dramatic enrollment losses create money worries for district officials, and in Seattle, officials aren't counting on students returning.</p> <p>Federal and state COVID relief funds did provide enough money to give every SPS elementary school at least a part-time social worker or counselor in the upcoming school year. John Hay will have a part-time social worker and part-time nurse, but no counselor.</p> <p>"It doesn't matter if you have a school of 300 or 500, kids need a counselor, kids need a full-time nurse, which almost no school has," Silver said.</p> <p>When there isn't a counselor or social worker on site, those jobs fall to the principal or other staff, Silver said.</p> <p>Seattle lost 3,238 students from the 2019-20 to 2021-22 school year. And in the fall SPS projects it will lose 812 more, dropping its total enrollment to 48,748 students.</p>

Public school enrollment has fallen throughout the state since the pandemic began, but it's not clear why Seattle numbers are so dismal.

"We don't know for sure the reason students leave," Song Maritz said. "We don't do exit interviews — we don't collect that information." She said anecdotally the district has heard that some parents can't afford Seattle housing anymore and others left to home school or send their kids to private school. New schools opening, elementary school boundary lines changing, and parents not being satisfied with public schools are also reasons for large enrollment drops.

"As a School Board director, I think it's important to collect that information to inform our decision making," she added.

The bulk of the enrollment decline was in the district's 62 elementary schools. The elementary schools with higher enrollment losses were in the north part of the city, data shows. However, Rising Star Elementary School in the South Beacon Hill neighborhood was the exception.

Out of the district's 10 K-8 schools, Licton Springs had the highest enrollment drop, about 39 percent since the 2019-20 school year. Catharine Blaine K-8 School enrollment is down by about one-quarter. All other K-8 schools had a 10 percent drop or less.

Meanwhile, the Archdiocese of Seattle Catholic Schools saw about a 6% increase in enrollment — the largest enrollment uptick in more than a decade, said Kristin Moore, director of marketing and enrollment for the 72 Catholic schools in Western Washington. About 5 percent of the increase in enrollment was in elementary grades, she said.

"From what we're hearing ... in terms of parents there's an overall unhappiness with what public schools have been able to deliver," Moore said. "A lot of families maybe came to Catholic schools because we were in person or had stronger academic programs."

Private schools transitioned to in-person classes quicker than most public schools. Schools in the Seattle Archdiocese began in-person classes in the fall of 2020, Moore said. SPS and most other districts didn't start back in-person until spring 2021 — students had almost a full year of remote learning. Catholic schools nationwide have seen upticks in enrollment, Moore said.

### **Biggest losses in North Seattle**

With the exception of Rising Star, the top five Seattle elementary schools that lost the most students were all in the north end.

John Hay, which had the largest enrollment decline, used to have many international students, Silver said, because tech companies in Seattle recruited overseas. During the pandemic many of those families moved out of state or out of the country.

"I think that's the main key to our enrollment loss," Principal Silver said. "During the pandemic people could not come to live here or didn't have to. The [housing] prices were just too high."

There are also many John Hay families who live in apartments, and "the cost is so high that it's not permanent housing," Silver said. "People come and go."

Rising Star was affected by the opening of Wing Luke Elementary in 2021, which changed elementary zoning boundaries, said Principal Huyen Lam. Some families opted to go to their neighborhood school, which was no longer Rising Star.

There were also a high number of students experiencing homelessness at Rising Star, Lam said. Transportation was difficult for those families when the pandemic hit, and to make transportation easier, Lam said officials encouraged families experiencing homelessness to transfer to their neighborhood school.

“It does impact our classroom staffing,” Lam said. “This is the first year we had a reduction in three classrooms.”

### **Some elementaries gained**

Seven Seattle elementary schools gained students since the 2019-20 school year. The three schools with the most dramatic enrollment increases were in North Seattle. One school stood out.

Queen Anne Elementary had a 120% increase, according to enrollment data, because it was the only SPS elementary that offered an online program, Song Maritz said. The upcoming school year the students taking online classes will be moved under the Cascade Parent Partnership Program.

Magnolia and Cedar Park elementary schools both had about a 21 percent increase in enrollment.

Magnolia opened in 2019, a reason why enrollment shot up, Song Maritz said. Typically when a new school opens, students in neighboring schools transfer.

“Just having the presence of a brand-new elementary school would naturally, for some families, cause them to shift to that school,” Song Maritz said.

Elementary zoning boundaries changed, which also changed some families’ neighborhood school to Magnolia, Song Maritz added.

Silver did not think John Hay lost very many students to Magnolia.

John Hay is neither a rich school nor a poor school — it lands somewhere in the middle, Silver said, because many parents at the school work and can’t afford to give to fundraisers. But the school was able to keep its reading specialist, even when the district didn’t have enough money to retain the position, because of PTA money.

“Our state is not funding our schools adequately — that was before the pandemic and continues to be,” Silver said. “The district is having to find ways to fund things and there simply just isn’t enough.”

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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 WA residents immigrants or 1 parent who is</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/how-many-wa-residents-are-immigrants-or-have-at-least-one-parent-who-is/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/how-many-wa-residents-are-immigrants-or-have-at-least-one-parent-who-is/</a>
GIST	<p>For nearly one-third of Washingtonians, immigration is not just a political issue — it’s also personal. That’s because in 2021, nearly 2.3 million Washington residents — 30% of the state’s population — were immigrants themselves, or had at least one parent who is an immigrant, according to new data from the Current Population Survey, a joint effort between the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.</p> <p>Immigration is one of the most prominent issues dividing the U.S. This data shows personal connection to immigration — whether by being an immigrant yourself or being the child of an immigrant — varies tremendously from state to state.</p> <p>Washington is one of 12 states where at least 30% of the population was either an immigrant or had at least one parent who is.</p> <p>The share of Washington’s population that falls into that category has increased significantly over the past couple decades. The 2000 data showed just 18% of the state’s population was an immigrant or a child of an immigrant.</p>



In 2021, California was the only state where the majority of residents fell into this category — about 51% of the population, or more than 19 million people. New Jersey and New York followed, both higher than 40%.

There is a wide gap between these states and those at the other end of the spectrum. In 11 states, less than 10% of the population was foreign-born or had at least one parent who is. Mississippi had the lowest share of such residents, at around 5%, followed by West Virginia and Alabama.

Nationally, 27% of Americans, or nearly 25 million people, were foreign-born or had at least one parent who is. Only fourteen states, including Washington and the District of Columbia, are higher than the U.S. percentage — these include the four most populous states, which are California, Texas, Florida and New York.

A breakdown of Washington's population shows roughly 5.3 million residents, or 70% of the population, were born in the U.S. to two parents who were also born in the country.

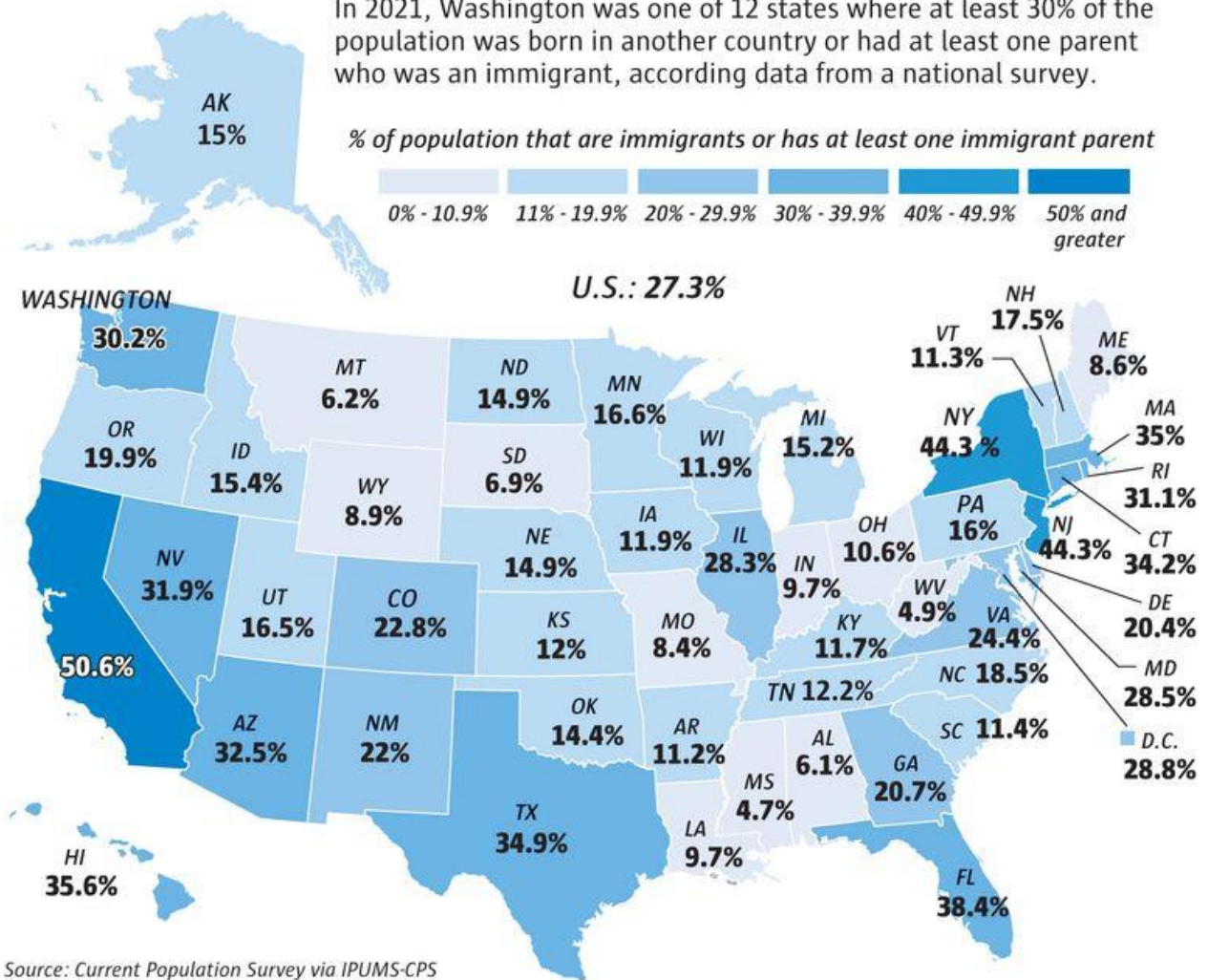
Another 1.2 million state residents, 16% of the population, immigrated to the U.S. from another country. The largest number of foreign-born Washingtonians were born in Mexico — more than a quarter million people. Next is India, the birthplace of around 120,000 state residents, followed by China at around 100,000 people.

Nearly 1.1 million Washingtonians, 14% of the population, were born in the U.S. to at least one foreign-born parent. For most of these folks — more than 600,000 — both parents were born abroad. The remainder have a single foreign-born parent, and the number with an immigrant mother, around 230,000, was a little higher than the number with an immigrant father, around 200,000.

The data also includes large metropolitan areas like Seattle where 1.6 million people, 39% of the population, were foreign-born or had at least one foreign-born parent. Seattle's metro area includes King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

## 30% of Washington residents are immigrants or children of immigrants

In 2021, Washington was one of 12 states where at least 30% of the population was born in another country or had at least one parent who was an immigrant, according to data from a national survey.



HEADLINE	07/25 Plan: plant 1B trees over 1M acres
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/us-to-plant-more-trees-as-climate-change-kills-off-forests/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/us-to-plant-more-trees-as-climate-change-kills-off-forests/</a>
GIST	<p>BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The Biden administration on Monday said the government will plant more than one billion trees across millions of acres of burned and dead woodlands in the U.S. West, as officials struggle to counter the increasing toll on the nation's forests from wildfires, insects and other manifestations of climate change.</p> <p>Destructive fires in recent years that burned too hot for forests to regrow naturally have far outpaced the government's capacity to plant new trees. That has created a backlog of 4.1 million acres (1.7 million hectares) in need of replanting, officials said.</p> <p>The U.S. Agriculture Department said it will have to quadruple the number of tree seedlings produced by nurseries to get through the backlog and meet future needs. That comes after Congress last year passed bipartisan legislation directing the Forest Service to plant 1.2 billion trees over the next decade and after President Joe Biden in April ordered the agency to make the nation's forests more resilient as the globe gets hotter.</p> <p>Much of the administration's broader agenda to tackle climate change remains stalled amid disagreement in Congress, where Democrats hold a razor-thin majority. That has left officials to pursue a more piecemeal approach with incremental measures such as Monday's announcement, while the administration</p>

considers whether to declare a climate emergency that could open the door to more aggressive executive branch actions.

To erase the backlog of decimated forest acreage, the Forest Service plans over the next couple years to scale up work from about 60,000 acres (24,000 hectares) replanted last year to about 400,000 acres (162,000 hectares) annually, officials said. Most of the work will be in western states where wildfires now occur year round and the need is most pressing, said David Lytle, the agency's director of forest management.

Blazes have charred 5.6 million acres so far in the U.S. this year, putting 2022 on track to match or exceed the record-setting 2015 fire season, when 10.1 million acres (4.1 million hectares) burned.

Many forests regenerate naturally after fires, but if the blazes get too intense they can leave behind barren landscapes that linger for decades before trees come back.

"Our forests, rural communities, agriculture and economy are connected across a shared landscape and their existence is at stake," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a statement announcing the reforestation plan. "Only through bold, climate-smart actions ... can we ensure their future."

The Forest Service this year is spending more than \$100 million on reforestation work. Spending is expected to further increase in coming years, to as much as \$260 million annually, under the sweeping federal infrastructure bill approved last year, agency officials said.

Some timber industry supporters were critical of last year's reforestation legislation as insufficient to turn the tide on the scale of the wildfire problem. They want more aggressive logging to thin stands that have become overgrown from years of suppressing fires.

To prevent replanted areas from becoming similarly overgrown, practices are changing so reforested stands are less dense with trees and therefore less fire prone, said Joe Fargione, science director for North America at the Nature Conservancy.

But challenges to the Forest Service's goal remain, from finding enough seeds to hiring enough workers to plant them, Fargione said.

Many seedlings will die before reaching maturity due to drought and insects, both of which can be exacerbated by climate change.

"You've got to be smart about where you plant," Fargione said. "There are some places that the climate has already changed enough that it makes the probability of successfully reestablishing trees pretty low."

Living trees are a major "sink" for carbon dioxide that's driving climate change when it enters the atmosphere, Fargione said. That means replacing those that die is important to keep climate change from getting even worse.

Congress in 1980 created a reforestation trust that had previously capped funding — which came from tariffs on timber products — at \$30 million annually. That was enough money when the most significant need for reforestation came from logging, but became insufficient as the number of large, high intensity fires increased, officials said.

Insects, disease and timber harvests also contribute to the amount of land that needs reforestation work, but the vast majority comes from fires. In the past five years alone more than 5 million acres were severely burned.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/science/russia-to-opt-out-of-international-space-station-after-2024/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/science/russia-to-opt-out-of-international-space-station-after-2024/</a>
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (AP) — Russia will opt out of the International Space Station after 2024 and focus on building its own orbiting outpost, the country’s newly appointed space chief said Tuesday.</p> <p>Yuri Borisov, who was appointed earlier this month to lead the state-controlled space corporation Roscosmos, said during a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin that Russia will fulfill its obligations to other partners at the International Space Station before it leaves the project.</p> <p>“The decision to leave the station after 2024 has been made,” Borisov said.</p> <p>Borisov’s statement reaffirmed previous declarations by Russian space officials about Moscow’s intention to leave the space outpost after 2024.</p> <p>It comes amid soaring tensions between Russia and the West over the Kremlin’s military action in Ukraine.</p> <p>Despite the rift, NASA and Roscosmos made a deal earlier this month for astronauts to continue riding Russian rockets and for Russian cosmonauts to catch lifts to the International Space Station with SpaceX beginning this fall.</p> <p>The agreement ensures that the space station will always have at least one American and one Russian on board to keep both sides of the orbiting outpost running smoothly, according to NASA and Russian officials. The swap had long been in the works and was finalized despite frictions over Ukraine in a sign of continuing Russia-U.S. cooperation in space.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Struggle: 43% fall deeper in debt</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnbc.com/2022/07/26/nearly-half-of-americans-fall-deeper-in-debt-as-inflation-boosts-costs.html">https://www.cnbc.com/2022/07/26/nearly-half-of-americans-fall-deeper-in-debt-as-inflation-boosts-costs.html</a>
GIST	<p>Higher prices have taken a toll.</p> <p>In an economy that has produced the <a href="#">highest inflation rate</a> since 1981, Americans are struggling to keep up with expenses and are putting less money aside for emergencies or long-term financial goals, several recent studies show.</p> <p>Nearly 40% of consumers cannot put <a href="#">any money at all into savings</a>, according to a recent analysis of household financial health and readiness by the American Consumer Credit Counseling, while about 19% said they had to reduce their savings rate.</p> <p>As of the second quarter of 2022, 48% of consumers said the rising cost of basic necessities impacted their family’s lifestyle, a steep jump from 39% in the first quarter.</p> <p>“The pandemic, wars overseas and other world events have had unprecedented effects on our society when it comes to household finances,” Allen Amadin, president and CEO of American Consumer Credit Counseling, said in a statement.</p> <p>“Consumers have been going through many different financial phases in a very short period of time forcing them to pivot several times accordingly to the challenge,” he said.</p> <p><b>It may get worse before it gets better</b></p> <p>In order to make ends meet, 43% of Americans expect to add to their debt in the next six months, especially young adults and parents with young children, according to a separate <a href="#">study by LendingTree</a>.</p> <p>Most will rely on <a href="#">credit card debt</a> to bridge the gap between what they need and what they can afford, the report found.</p>

Already, the rise in borrowing, together with auto loans, student debt and mortgages, propelled total household debt to a [record \\$15.84 trillion](#) at the beginning of the year.

“The truth is that debt can be either a sign of confidence or struggle,” said Matt Schulz, LendingTree’s chief credit analyst.

“Many people take on debt because they feel good about their financial situation and aren’t too worried about paying a little interest if it gets them what they want or need,” Schulz said. “Plenty of others take on debt because they have to.

“There’s no question that both situations are happening right now,” he added.

In the last year, the number of banking customers who consider themselves “financially healthy” has plummeted, an indication that inflation is starting to impact most people’s economic wellbeing.

Americans’ overall satisfaction with their financial condition now stands at a 12-month low, according to J.D. Power data, while those who classify themselves as financially unhealthy is as high as 64%.

That drop in overall financial health is largely due to a borrowing more and saving less with fewer safety nets in place, including emergency funds and insurance coverage, and the impact that has on their [creditworthiness](#).

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Big consumer brands to raise prices</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/dont-expect-big-consumer-brands-to-lower-prices-soon-11658858815">https://www.wsj.com/articles/dont-expect-big-consumer-brands-to-lower-prices-soon-11658858815</a>
GIST	<p>Consumers looking for relief from higher prices might have to wait a while.</p> <p>The makers of Coca-Cola beverages, Dove shampoo, Huggies diapers and Big Macs have been raising prices as their costs increase on everything from wood pulp to wages. The executives behind these global brands on Tuesday said they would keep passing along those costs to shoppers, for now. Consumers are continuing to buy even as inflation takes a toll on households, these executives said.</p> <p>However, some companies are already warning of a consumer pullback. <a href="#">Walmart</a> Inc. and the makers of <a href="#">Whirlpool</a> Corp. appliances and <a href="#">Weber</a> Inc. grills this week <a href="#">reported weakening demand</a> for key products. The announcement from Walmart, which also <a href="#">cut its profit outlook</a>, sparked a selloff in retail stocks and revealed cracks in the strong spending that has powered the U.S. economy through the pandemic.</p> <p>“We continue to see resilience and <a href="#">a lot of demand</a> not just in the U.S. but across the world,” John Murphy, <a href="#">Coca-Cola</a> Co.’s finance chief, said in an interview. Some consumers are willing, Coca-Cola said, to spend now after missing out on restaurant dining and entertainment during the pandemic.</p> <p><a href="#">Unilever</a> PLC, whose products include Dove shampoo and Ben &amp; Jerry’s ice cream, said <a href="#">prices rose 11.2%</a> across its portfolio. <a href="#">Kimberly-Clark</a> Corp., which makes Huggies and Cottonelle toilet paper, said its net selling prices rose 9%.</p> <p>In the market for luxury goods, customers aren’t complaining about higher prices. Executives from conglomerate LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE said they haven’t seen any pushback from customers on price increases implemented earlier in the year.</p> <p>Such price increases are a key reason that <a href="#">official measures of inflation</a> in the U.S. are hovering near historic highs and the Federal Reserve is expected this week to raise interest rates again as the central bank tries to slow demand and stabilize prices. U.S. consumer inflation accelerated to 9.1% in June, a pace not seen in more than four decades.</p>



Consumer behavior is shifting in other ways. Unilever, in some parts of the world, and grocery-store chain [Albertsons](#) Cos. said they were seeing signs that consumers [were moving more spending to generic store brands](#), which generally cost less. Unilever's volumes slipped 2.1% in the quarter. But executives said they were sticking with plans to push up prices.

"We are pricing ahead of the market, and we're prepared to tolerate low-single-digit volume declines and some compromise on competitiveness for a limited period of time in order to land that price," said Unilever Chief Executive Alan Jope.

Likewise, Kimberly-Clark said consumers and businesses paid more for products but cut back on how much they bought. Sales volumes fell 1% for the quarter. The company raised revenue expectations for the calendar year, but predicted that higher costs for everything from pulp to shipping will eat into profitability more than anticipated.

Executives said they told retailers last week of [another round of price hikes](#), with the percentage increase in the mid-single digits, that, coupled with cost-cutting, should offset higher costs for the rest of the year.

"There is a segment of consumers who are trading down, but it's not all consumers," Kimberly-Clark CEO Mike Hsu said. The company, he said, faces a tough balancing act in [making budget-conscious offerings available](#) without pushing consumers toward cheaper alternatives. "We want to be very cognizant that we don't move the whole market that way. There are plenty of consumers that, despite the impact of the economy...they are still looking to trade up."

Adenna and Scott Streyle, who live in Lodi, Calif., delayed an anniversary trip twice in the pandemic. But after arriving in New York City, they planned to splurge to see the famous sights, attend a few Broadway shows and stay in a nice hotel, Adenna Streyle said Tuesday.

When the couple returns from vacation, they plan to resume more stringent monitoring of day-to-day spending, including fewer recreational activities, eating out less and budgeting for gas, she said.

[McDonald's](#) Corp. executives said lower-income customers are trading down more of their purchases to value offerings and fewer combo meals. The company said it is also gaining consumers who are opting to move away from sit-down and fast-casual restaurants, even as the burger chain [has been raising prices](#). [Chipotle Mexican Grill](#) Inc. said it was primed to increase prices again in August after reporting that higher menu prices helped lift second-quarter revenue 17% from a year earlier.

Purchases of some durable goods are holding up. [General Motors](#) Co. reported [an increase in quarterly revenue](#) and that it benefited from purchases of full-size trucks and sport-utility vehicles, which typically carry higher prices. "We're selling every vehicle we can make right now," said GM CEO Mary Barra, adding that inventory levels are too lean at dealers, in part, because of a prolonged shortage in computer chips for cars and trucks.

U.S. unemployment is low, wages have been rising and many consumers by various measures remain flush. [Spending on Chase credit cards rose 21%](#) in the second quarter from a year ago, JPMorgan Chase & Co. said this month. That growth included spending on travel and dining.

However, consumer sentiment in June fell to its lowest level on record and there are signs of strain on household budgets. The U.S. personal-savings rate is hovering near levels last seen more than a decade ago. [AT&T](#) Inc. cautioned last week that its customers were on average two days [slower to pay their monthly phone and internet bills](#).

"We have kept our shopping list pretty focused on the basics since costs are higher," said Bethany Winston, a Greenville, S.C., mother of two about back-to-school shopping, which she started earlier this year than last. This year is also the first year that her children have needed uniforms, which required



	<p>specific items and made cheaper alternatives less available, she said. But, she said she knows parents who have had luck with second-hand shops, online retailers like Facebook Marketplace and consignment shops.</p> <p>Customers are buying cheaper rice, beans, oils and other products, often purchasing the grocer's store brands, said Vivek Sankaran, CEO of Albertsons. Some consumers are looking for value but still are willing to spend on items that they care about, he said.</p> <p>Private-label store brands have also gained ground in European countries such as Spain, Italy, the U.K. and Germany across food, ice cream and household-cleaning products and in the U.S. across food and ice cream, Unilever's finance chief, Graeme Pitkethly, said Tuesday.</p> <p>"We expect peak inflation to come in the second half of the year," Mr. Pitkethly said. He added that Unilever's price hikes have lagged behind cost increases through the first half of the year.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Suspected Russia spy station in New York</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/secret-briefing-zeroes-in-on-suspected-russian-spy-station-in-new-york?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/secret-briefing-zeroes-in-on-suspected-russian-spy-station-in-new-york?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p>The State Department is so worried that a Russian diplomatic compound in the Bronx is serving as a Russian spy hub that it held a classified briefing about the compound on Friday.</p> <p>The previously unreported briefing touched on concerns about the compound and its potential ties to Russian espionage operations—concerns which Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-NY) raised in March of this year when he sent a letter to the Directors of the FBI, CIA, the Director of National Intelligence, and the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice.</p> <p>Torres, a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, requested that the Biden Administration consider opening an investigation into the compound in order to protect the country against Russian espionage.</p> <p>It's not clear what the outcome of the meeting was. Torres declined to comment on what was discussed in the meeting, citing the classified nature of the gathering. Due to security reasons, the State Department also declined to share details about the meeting.</p> <p>But the compound—located at 355 West 255th St. in Riverdale, NY—has long been suspected to serve not only as a residence for Russian diplomats, but also as an outpost for Russian intelligence agencies. Ever since the austere, 20-story white building in the complex was constructed in the 1970s to serve as an enclave for Russian diplomats working at the United Nations (UN), it's been the focus of speculation that the Russians are using the building's towering perch to conduct surveillance, evade U.S. intelligence operatives, and conduct other spy work.</p> <p>Many Russian spies have been linked to the complex over the years. Earlier this year <a href="#">the United States expelled 12 Russian diplomats</a> from Moscow's UN mission for conducting intelligence operations against the United States. The <a href="#">Russian mission</a> said at the time that most of its diplomats lived in the building.</p> <p>In 2015, the FBI arrested Evgeniy Buryakov, a Russian man who eventually pleaded guilty to working for Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), and who lived nearby the compound. He worked under non-official cover and appeared to have a regular job as a banker in Manhattan, but really traded coded messages with Russian spies that went straight back to Moscow, according to the <a href="#">Department of Justice</a>.</p> <p>In a classic case of spy versus spy, U.S. intelligence operatives have been working to track the Russian agents there for years. Robin Dreeke, a former FBI Special Agent and Head of the Counterintelligence Behavioral Analysis Program, told The Daily Beast that he and fellow FBI agents tried to track and recruit Russian spies known to live at the compound.</p>

“They are known intelligence officers that work at the United Nations,” Dreeke told The Daily Beast, adding that they communicated some of their information back to Moscow from the Riverdale complex itself. “Being a diplomat is their day job, but really probably 90 percent of their job is being an intelligence officer, collecting on information gaps on behalf of Russia. They live there, guaranteed.”

New York and the Riverdale complex are teeming with Russian intelligence operatives, said John Sipher, who previously worked for the CIA’s clandestine service and ran Russian operations at headquarters. “Russians have always had a very, very robust intelligence collection there,” Sipher told The Daily Beast. “New York is one of the premier spy cities in the world. There’s probably more targets of interest to foreign intelligence officers in New York than almost anywhere else, except perhaps, Washington.”

Although the contents of the State Department’s classified briefing aren’t clear, the status of the compound still appears to hang in the balance. The kind of investigation Torres is asking about—one that touches on counterespionage—would typically fall to the FBI, which is the top agency in the United States for preventing, investigating, and exposing intelligence operations in the United States.

But the FBI is deferring to the State Department. The FBI has told Torres that the question of whether the Russian diplomatic compound in Riverdale poses a national security risk or threat is not the bureau’s jurisdiction, and that it is instead up to the State Department’s Office of Foreign Missions (OFM), Torres told The Daily Beast.

It’s a curious turn of events that leaves the compound in something of a no man’s land, as it would be best to assume there is some espionage activity tied to the compound, according to Larry Pfeiffer, a former chief of staff to the CIA Director and former senior director of the White House Situation Room.

“It would be normal for any U.S. counterintelligence organization to assume that any and every Russian facility is going to be a place where espionage is conducted,” Pfeiffer, a former NSA analyst, told The Daily Beast.

But the FBI’s decision to back off doesn’t add up given its keen interest in the compound, according to Sipher.

“That seems really odd to me. There’s a long history of the FBI in particular watching that compound up there for a variety of reasons,” Sipher told The Daily Beast. “The FBI has recruited a number of Russian spies who lived in the Riverdale complex over the years, and they know from their reporting that they use the place to try to hide from the FBI.”

The State Department’s OFM works to regulate the activities of foreign missions in the United States with an eye toward protecting U.S. national security. That includes protecting the United States from “abuses of privileges and immunities by members of the foreign missions.”

But the OFM hasn’t traditionally had resourcing or capabilities to handle an FBI-level counterintelligence investigation, according to Brett Bruen, a former U.S. diplomat and National Security Council official.

“OFM is a pretty small operation and any capacity that they would have to investigate would be fairly limited, certainly not to look into major intelligence issues of interest. That’s not their area. They would be responsible for abuses, parking passes, those kind of minor administrative matters,” Bruen said. “I just don’t envision any scenario in which they would be charged with looking into intelligence activities of another country or even a compound.”

A State Department spokesperson told The Daily Beast: “As a general matter we do not comment on correspondence with Congress, nor do we comment on intelligence matters. We can confirm that the Riverdale compound is the State Department’s jurisdiction.”

Whatever happened in the State Department meeting hasn't lessened the spying concerns. As a followup to the meeting, Torres sent a letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray and Attorney General Merrick Garland on Tuesday evening, imploring the FBI to intervene.

"I write to express concerns I hear from my constituents about the operation at the Russian Diplomatic Compound," Torres said in the letter, which his office shared with The Daily Beast. "Given the heightened risk of Russian retaliation against the United States for aiding the Ukrainian struggle for self-rule, the FBI should strongly consider assessing whether the presence of the Russian Diplomatic Compound in the Bronx threatens the national security interests of the United States."

The FBI, for its part, needs to take accountability for the compound, Torres told The Daily Beast.

"The FBI is downplaying the crucial role that it can play in the ultimate closing of the compound. If the FBI were to assess the compound as a national security risk, the Office of Foreign Missions would be left with no choice but to take corrective action," Torres told The Daily Beast. "When the FBI speaks, OFM listens. And yet the FBI has been silent when it comes to the national security risks of the Russian diplomatic compound in Riverdale."

The FBI declined to comment on this story.

The news of the State Department's attempt to address Torres' concerns and his letter come as world leaders around the globe are trying to clamp down on Russian spying operations as Russia continues to wage war in Ukraine. The MI6 chief, Richard Moore, revealed last week at the Aspen security conference that approximately half of Russian spies operating as diplomats in Europe—400 of them—have been expelled from Europe since Russia invaded Ukraine.

The expulsions have likely hampered Russian intelligence-gathering in Europe on key topics, such as European sanctions plans and other efforts to counter Russia, which could inform the Kremlin's war plans. The CIA, FBI, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence declined to share details on similar U.S. efforts.

But while Russia wages war in Ukraine, now is as good a time as ever to investigate the compound, Torres said.

"The notion of allowing Russian espionage to go unchecked at the diplomatic compound in Riverdale at a time when Russia has threatened cyber retaliation against the United States is profoundly reckless and dangerous," Torres said.

The United States might be hesitant to go after the compound for other reasons, such as to avoid tit-for-tat responses. As dissent among Russians has surged during Russia's war in Ukraine, the U.S. government has been stepping up efforts to [recruit disaffected Russians](#) to serve as assets for the U.S. intelligence community. [The FBI has been targeting Russians in Washington, D.C.](#) in recent weeks to try convincing potential assets to turn. Going after the compound might jeopardize this ongoing recruitment drive.

"Wouldn't surprise me if there were FBI agents getting lunch more frequently at the diners around there," Pfeiffer said.

Over the years, the [U.S. government](#) has taken various steps to oust Russian spies from the United States—and shutting down compounds isn't an entirely outlandish idea. [The Obama administration shuttered two Russian compounds](#) in New York and Maryland in 2016 that U.S. intelligence officials said Moscow used for intelligence collection. The administration also expelled 35 Russian officials they said were working as Russian spies.

At the time, the United States said it was retaliating for Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections.

	<p>But the U.S. government can shutter compounds without needing to justify it as a political move; The compounds and some of those expelled in 2016 were running <a href="#">a sweeping counterintelligence operation</a> in the United States—they'd figured out ways to evade FBI surveillance, track down U.S. intelligence communications, and ultimately communicate with their assets, according to a Yahoo News report.</p> <p>And at this point, a full accounting of what goes on at Riverdale—and how it benefits Russia's espionage goals—still needs to be done, according to Torres.</p> <p>“Why would Russia locate the compound at the highest point of elevation in the Bronx? There's nothing accidental about the siting,” Torres told The Daily Beast. “It stands both literally and metaphorically as a structure of surveillance.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Deadly anti-UN protests Congo's east</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/killed-50-injured-anti-protests-congos-east-87422977">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/killed-50-injured-anti-protests-congos-east-87422977</a>
GIST	<p>KINSHASA, Congo -- At least 15 people were killed and dozens of others injured during two days of demonstrations in Congo's east against the United Nations mission in the country, officials said Tuesday.</p> <p>The United Nations said one peacekeeper from Morocco and two international policemen from India serving with the U.N. peacekeeping force were slain and a policeman from Egypt was injured at the U.N. base in Butembo in North Kivu province when “violent attackers snatched weapons from Congolese police” and fired on U.N. personnel.</p> <p>U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the Butembo attack and violence targeting multiple U.N. bases across North Kivu since Monday, U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said.</p> <p>Haq said that on Tuesday “hundreds of assailants” attacked bases of the U.N. force in Goma and other parts of North Kivu, “fueled by hostile remarks and threats made by individuals and groups against the U.N., particularly on social media.”</p> <p>“Mobs are throwing stones and petrol bombs, breaking into bases, looting and vandalizing, and setting facilities on fire,” Haq said. “We are trying to calm things down” including by dispatching quick reaction forces but there is no evidence the violence has ended.</p> <p>In addition, Haq said at least four incidents targeted the residences of mission staff, who have now been relocated to U.N. camps. A mob also tried to enter the compound of the U.N. Development Program Tuesday but was rebuffed by security guards, he said.</p> <p>Demonstrators on Monday set fires and forced entry into the U.N. mission offices in Goma, accusing the peacekeeping force of failing to protect civilians amid rising violence in Congo's eastern region. They are calling for the U.N. forces, present in Congo for years, to leave.</p> <p>Congo's police said at least six people were killed in Goma on Monday, and eight civilians in Butembo. Earlier, government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said at least five people were killed and about 50 wounded by Monday.</p> <p>Protesters blamed shots fired by the peacekeepers for the deaths.</p> <p>The secretary-general “regrets the loss of life of demonstrators” and affirms the U.N. peacekeeping mission's commitment to work with Congolese authorities to investigate these incidents, Haq said.</p> <p>Guterres underscored that any attack directed at U.N. peacekeepers might constitute a war crime and called on Congolese authorities to swiftly investigate the killings and bring those responsible to justice, the spokesman said.</p>

Congo's mineral-rich east is home to myriad rebel groups and the region's security has worsened despite a year of emergency operations by a joint force of the armies of Congo and Uganda. Civilians in the east have also had to deal with violence from jihadi rebels linked to the Islamic State group.

The government spokesman didn't say what caused the deaths but on Twitter, he described the response by security forces and peacekeepers as "warning shots to disperse the demonstrators and prevent any attack" on U.N. installations.

"The government has instructed the security forces to take all measures to ensure a return to calm and the normal resumption of activities in Goma," he said. He also reiterated that steps are already being taken for the peacekeeping forces to be withdrawn.

In June 2021 and June 2022, the peacekeeping mission closed its office in Congo's Kasai Central and Tanganyika regions. The mission has more than 16,000 uniformed personnel in Congo, according to the U.N.

The protests are taking place as fighting has escalated between Congolese troops and the M23 rebels, forcing nearly 200,000 people to flee their homes. The M23 forces have shown increased firepower and defense capabilities, according to a report by Human Rights Watch.

Khassim Diagne, acting head of the peacekeeping mission, and Haq condemned the killings of U.N. personnel. Haq said U.N. peacekeeping chief Jean Pierre Lacroix, who is currently in Mali, will be traveling to Congo "at his earliest opportunity."

Diagne described the violence against the U.N. as "absolutely unacceptable" and "counterproductive," given the U.N. force's mission to protect civilians, deter armed groups and build the capacity of state institutions and services.

Haq responded to a question asking whether the U.N.'s effort had been a failure because armed groups still roam the country saying "our presence has provided protection but it has not solved the problem" which involves the region and armed groups vying for control of mineral and resource-rich regions.

Within that, he said, the U.N. has been "doing our best" to ensure that people's lives and basic freedoms aren't taken away.

Haq said the U.N. has had plans to draw down its peacekeeping force and even withdraw from Congo but "we have stayed because the situation on the ground is far too dangerous for us to contemplate leaving and putting that many people at risk."

Guterres later reaffirmed the U.N.'s "strong commitment" to Congo's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the U.N. peacekeeping mission's support for "the Congolese government and people in their efforts to bring about peace and stability in the east of the country."

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HEADLINE	07/27 Philippines scraps Russia Mi-17 deal
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ap-exclusive-philippines-scraps-russian-chopper-deal-87474876">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ap-exclusive-philippines-scraps-russian-chopper-deal-87474876</a>
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines -- The Philippine government has scrapped a deal to purchase 16 Russian military transport helicopters due to fears of possible U.S. sanctions, Philippine officials said.</p> <p>Former Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Tuesday night he canceled the 12.7-billion-peso (\$227 million) deal to acquire the Mi-17 helicopters in a decision last month that was approved by then-President Rodrigo Duterte before their terms in office ended on June 30.</p>

“We could face sanctions,” Lorenzana told The Associated Press, describing ways Washington could express its displeasure if the Philippines proceeded with the deal due to America’s worsening conflict with Russia.

American security officials were aware of Manila’s decision and could offer similar heavy-lift helicopters for Philippine military use, he said.

After serving as defense chief under Duterte, Lorenzana has been appointed by new President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to head a government agency in charge of transforming former military bases into business hubs.

Philippine Ambassador to Washington Jose Manuel Romualdez told The AP that the deal was canceled because Manila could face possible sanctions under a U.S. federal law called the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act if the helicopter deal went through.

A Philippine military official said the helicopter deal would undergo a “termination process” after the decision to cancel it was made since a contract has already been signed. The Russians can appeal but there is little room for the Philippine government to reconsider, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to publicly discuss the issue.

Under the helicopter purchase agreement, which was signed in November, the first batch of the multi-purpose helicopters would have been scheduled for delivery by Russia’s Sovtechnoexport in about two years.

Asked in March if Russia’s invasion of [Ukraine](#) would affect the purchase, Lorenzana told reporters: “We do not see any likelihood of it being scrapped as of this moment” and added that “only time can tell.”

Lorenzana at the time said an initial payment had been made by the Philippines in January. It was not immediately clear what would happen to the payment after the Philippines’ decision to back out of the deal.

The Russian-made helicopters could have been used for combat, search and rescue operations, and medical evacuations in the Southeast Asian archipelago, which is often lashed by typhoons and other natural disasters, Philippine officials said.

In March, the Philippines voted “yes” on a U.N. General Assembly resolution that demanded an immediate halt to Moscow’s attack on Ukraine and the withdrawal of all Russian troops. It condemned the invasion and echoed U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres’s appeal for respect of humanitarian principles to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine.

Duterte has expressed concern over the global impact of the Russian invasion but has not personally condemned it. When he was in office, he nurtured close ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom he once called his “idol,” and Chinese leader Xi Jinping while frequently criticizing U.S. security policies.

The Philippines is a treaty ally of Washington, which has imposed heavy sanctions aimed at pressuring Moscow to pull back from Ukraine.

The deal to acquire the Russian helicopters was among several weapons purchase agreements signed during Duterte’s final months in office.

Last February, Lorenzana signed a 32-billion-peso (\$571 million) deal to acquire 32 S-70i Black Hawk helicopters from Poland-based aerospace manufacturer PZL Mielec. It was the largest military aircraft acquisition contract signed under Duterte, Philippine defense officials said.



	Due to financial constraints, the Philippines has struggled for years to modernize its military, one of the most underfunded in Asia, to deal with decades-long Muslim and communist insurgencies and to defend its territories in the disputed South China Sea.
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 US leads globe reported monkeypox cases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/us-now-leads-globe-reported-monkeypox-cases-data/story?id=87442616">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/us-now-leads-globe-reported-monkeypox-cases-data/story?id=87442616</a>
GIST	<p>The United States now leads the globe in confirmed monkeypox cases, new data published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has revealed.</p> <p>The U.S. has reported a total of 3,846 known monkeypox cases as of Monday, July 25, federal and global data shows, surpassing Spain, which has reported 3,100 cases, and Germany, which has 2,352 cases.</p> <p>"The international community must work together to protect individuals that have been impacted by monkeypox, and those most at risk of contracting the virus," White House COVID-19 Coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha said during a press briefing on Tuesday.</p> <p>"We want to make sure that we all Americans understand that we have taken we are continue to take this virus seriously," he added.</p> <p>Last week, the World Health Organization declared the monkeypox outbreak a public health emergency of international concern.</p> <p>Across the globe, nearly 18,100 cases have been confirmed in 75 countries, including more than 17,800 cases confirmed in countries that have not historically reported monkeypox.</p> <p>Health experts have said that the number of monkeypox cases is likely much higher than the total that is officially reported, and U.S. health officials have been warning for weeks that the number of monkeypox cases would likely increase across the country, as the government increases testing capacity and surveillance.</p> <p>"I would like you all to understand that we anticipate an increase in cases in the coming weeks," CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said during a press briefing earlier this month.</p> <p>With increased testing, an improved reporting system for states, and the continued spread of disease, more cases will be identified, she said.</p> <p>"We know monkeypox symptoms usually start within three weeks of exposure to the virus, so we anticipate we may see an increase in cases throughout the month of July and into August," Walensky added.</p> <p>Monkeypox transmission typically occurs through close contact for an extended period of time, or contact with articles of clothing, bedding, or towels that have been in contact with an infectious patient, Dr. Amy Arrington, Medical Director, Special Isolation Unit at Texas Children's Hospital, told ABC News.</p> <p>"You cannot get this virus from touching an elevator button, from walking past someone in the mall casually. It is spread by close contact - contact with lesions so touching infectious lesions or infectious scabs," Arrington said.</p> <p>Although the vast majority — 99% — of the cases reported domestically have been related to male-to-male sexual contact, according to the <a href="#">WHO</a>, last week, federal officials confirmed that two children in the U.S. had tested positive for monkeypox.</p> <p>One case has occurred in a toddler, who is a resident of California, and the other has been reported in an infant, who is a non-U.S. resident.</p>

	<p>The two cases are unrelated, located in different jurisdictions, and were likely the result of household transmission, officials said.</p> <p>Officials have repeatedly stressed that although monkeypox is affecting the "gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men," community most prominently, at this time, the virus can affect anyone who has close contact with people who have monkeypox, including children.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Pacific Northwest breaks heat records</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/heat-warnings-issued-pacific-northwest-temperatures-break-records/story?id=87450714">https://abcnews.go.com/US/heat-warnings-issued-pacific-northwest-temperatures-break-records/story?id=87450714</a>
GIST	<p>Excessive heat warnings are in effect for parts of the Pacific Northwest on Tuesday, as temperatures topped 100 degrees.</p> <p>Portland hit 102 degrees, while in Redding, California, temperatures reached 103 degrees. Temperatures in Medford, Oregon, climbed to 107 degrees on Monday.</p> <p>People in Washington state are also facing extreme temperatures. Seattle hit a record high of 92 degrees on Tuesday, while Spokane reached 98 degrees and will hit triple digits on Wednesday and Thursday.</p> <p>The extreme heat will persist in the region for the rest of the week, according to the National Weather Service. The record for most consecutive days where temperatures were 95 degrees and up in Portland is six days— this heat wave could break or tie that record.</p> <p>Oregon’s Department of Emergency Management <a href="#">opened up</a> misting stations and overnight cooling shelters on Tuesday to help residents deal with the dangerous heat.</p> <p>Oregon Gov. Kate Brown declared a state of emergency on Tuesday for 25 of the state's counties until July 31.</p> <p>"With many parts of Oregon facing a high heat wave, it is critical that every level of government has the resources they need to help keep Oregonians safe and healthy," Brown said in a <a href="#">statement</a>. "I encourage everyone to take proactive steps to keep themselves and their families safe, including drinking plenty of fluids, taking advantage of cooling centers, and checking in on neighbors, friends, and loved ones."</p> <p>According to a 2021 study, heat waves in the Pacific Northwest would be <a href="#">“virtually impossible”</a> without human-caused climate change.</p> <p>Smoke from the <a href="#">Oak Fire near Yosemite National Park</a>, which has burned more than 18,000 acres, is spreading into Northern California and southern Oregon. The fire, combined with the heat wave, is causing very poor air quality in the area.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 China targeted Fed: build informant network</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-targeted-fed-to-build-informant-network-access-data-a-probe-says-11658826000">https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-targeted-fed-to-build-informant-network-access-data-a-probe-says-11658826000</a>
GIST	<p>China tried to build a network of informants inside the Federal Reserve system, at one point threatening to imprison a Fed economist during a trip to Shanghai unless he agreed to provide nonpublic economic data, a congressional investigation found.</p> <p>The investigation by Republican staff members of the Senate’s Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs found that over a decade Fed employees were <a href="#">offered contracts with Chinese talent recruitment</a> programs, which often include cash payments, and asked to provide information on the U.S. economy, interest rate changes and policies, according to a report of the findings released on Tuesday.</p>

In the case of the economist, the report said, Chinese officials in 2019 detained and tried to coerce him to share data and information on U.S. government policies, including on tariffs while the U.S. and China were [in the midst of a trade war](#).

The report doesn't say whether any sensitive information was compromised. Access to such information could provide valuable insights given the Fed's extensive analysis of U.S. economic activity, its oversight of the U.S. financial system, and the setting of interest-rate policy.

The Republican-led investigation said the Fed failed to mount an adequate response. The report's findings show "a sustained effort by China, over more than a decade, to gain influence over the Federal Reserve and a failure by the Federal Reserve to combat this threat effectively."

Fed Chairman Jerome Powell strongly [disputed the report's findings](#) and called its characterizations of some employees unfair. "Because we understand that some actors aim to exploit any vulnerabilities, our processes, controls, and technology are robust and updated regularly. We respectfully reject any suggestions to the contrary," he wrote in a letter to Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, the committee's top Republican.

Mr. Powell detailed the central bank's information security and background screening protocols, including reviews of foreign travel and personal contacts for staff who have access to restricted information. "We take seriously any violations of these robust information security policies," he wrote.

China has mounted what U.S. counterintelligence officials say is among the [broadest campaigns to obtain U.S. government information](#) and proprietary business secrets and scientific and technology research. In doing so, it has frequently used [talent-recruitment programs](#), which often include lucrative appointments at Chinese research institutes and which U.S. counterintelligence officials say offer an incentive to steal secrets.

China criticized the report, with a Chinese embassy spokesman in Washington citing the "Cold War zero-sum thinking" of some members of Congress. "The cooperation between China and the U.S. in economic, financial and other fields is open and aboveboard, which has played an important role in enhancing mutual understanding and mutual trust between the two countries," said the spokesman, Liu Pengyu.

The congressional Republican report draws heavily from a separate internal Fed investigation conducted by the central bank beginning in 2015. The Fed, the congressional report said, began its probe after an unspecified outside entity warned that foreign adversaries had tried to build relationships with Fed researchers typically by offering "compensated contractual relationships."

The Fed investigation identified 13 people of interest, dubbed the "P-Network" by internal investigators, who were employed at eight of the 12 regional Fed banks, the report said.

A former employee of the Fed or one of its regional banks, identified as "Z," attempted to recruit the network's members, according to the report. That person maintained ties to Chinese government-backed talent recruitment programs and "expressed a desire to maintain an inside information sharing relationship" with Fed employees, the report said.

The Fed investigation found that one economist in the Fed system, who was later fired for violating central bank rules, had been close to "Z," the report said.

Since providing its "P-Network" findings to Congress in December 2020, the Fed now disputes many results of its inquiry, the report said. The Fed raised concerns about the accuracy of its findings this month and cannot locate some of the investigative materials, the report said.

In his letter to Mr. Portman, Mr. Powell said the Fed would be concerned about “any supportable allegation of wrongdoing, whatever the source. In contrast, we are deeply troubled by what we believe to be the report’s unfair, unsubstantiated, and unverified insinuations about particular staff members.”

“I am concerned by the threat to the Fed,” Mr. Portman said in a statement. He said he hopes the investigation “wakes the Fed up to the broad threat from China to our monetary policy. The risk is clear.”

The Fed maintains channels to central banks around the world, and inside the Fed system many researchers have previous work experience at foreign central banks and universities. The international appeal of the U.S. central bank is seen by many economists as one of its strengths in fostering excellence in research.

After Congress began its investigation, the Fed began banning officials from accepting compensation from certain countries including China, the report said. The policies, however, don’t require employees to disclose membership in talent recruitment plans, the report said. Despite known ties to talent plans or relationships with members, committee aides said that four of the five people cited in their report retain access to confidential Fed information.

The congressional report details multiple instances involving “P-Network” individuals including one who gave economic modeling code to a Chinese university with ties to the People’s Bank of China, the report said.

Another attempted to transfer large volumes of data from the Fed to an external site on at least two occasions, the report said. This person had also previously received a request from a person linked to the Chinese government for nonpublic information on three Fed bank presidents’ views on rate increases, the report said.

A committee aide said he didn’t know if Chinese government officials received any of the information. In his letter, Mr. Powell said the central bank posts its most important economic models publicly online to better engage with other professionals about its analysis. He said that Fed systems monitor for unauthorized transfers of data and information.

The most extreme example cited in the report involved the Fed economist who traveled to Shanghai in 2019 after the [U.S. and China had levied tariffs](#) on hundreds of billions of dollars of goods. Chinese officials detained the economist on four occasions during the trip, the report said.

The economist later reported to the bank that Chinese officials initially approached him at his hotel room “making the atmosphere frightening” and told him that they had been monitoring his phone conversations, including those involving a previous divorce, the report said.

The Chinese officials told the Fed employee that he must “share sensitive, nonpublic economic data to which he has access” and that he must “advise senior [Chinese] government officials on sensitive economic issues, including trade tariffs” and confidential information, according to the report. The officials also threatened to imprison him and destroy his life if he didn’t sign a letter promising not to mention the encounters to his family, the report said.

Fed officials told committee staff that they reported the incident to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and to the State Department. In July 2019, the Fed issued a general warning to all economists about travel to China, the report said. The FBI declined to comment; the State Department didn’t return a request for comment.

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HEADLINE	07/25 Reactions to Pope’s apology on schools
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-07-25/tribal-leaders-members-react-to-popes-apology-on-schools">https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-07-25/tribal-leaders-members-react-to-popes-apology-on-schools</a>

## GIST

MASKWACIS, Alberta (AP) — Pope Francis' apology Monday for the Catholic Church's role in Canada's residential school system and the abuses that took place within it was a full-throated denunciation of a decadeslong policy of forced assimilation that aimed to strip Indigenous children of their culture and traumatized generations.

Speaking at the site of a former residential school south of Edmonton, Alberta, the pontiff said he was “deeply sorry” for actions by many in support of “the colonizing mentality of the powers that oppressed the Indigenous peoples.”

He also expressed sorrow over the schools' systemic marginalization, denigration and suppression of Indigenous people, languages and culture; the “physical, verbal, psychological and spiritual abuse” children suffered after being taken from their homes at a young age; and the “indelibly” altered family relationships that resulted.

“I myself wish to reaffirm this, with shame and unambiguously. I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous peoples,” Francis said.

Here are some reactions to the pope's remarks:

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“It was an achievement on the part of the Indigenous community to convince Pope Francis to come to a First Nation community and humble himself before survivors in the way he did today. It was special. And I know that it meant a lot to a lot of people. And every time he said the word sorry, people would start applauding,” Phil Fontaine, a residential school abuse survivor and former chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

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“We may all need time to fully absorb the gravity of this moment. ... If you want to help us heal, stop telling us to get over it. ... We can't get over it when intergenerational trauma impacts every youth and every member, every family who had a residential school survivor. Instead of getting over it, I'm asking you to get with it, get with learning about our history, get with learning about our culture, our people, who we are,” Chief Desmond Bull of Louis Bull Tribe said during a news conference.

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It “was validation that this really happened” for the apology to be heard by non-Indigenous people, Chief Tony Alexis of the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation said, but the pope needs to follow up with action and “can't just say sorry and walk away.”

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“I've waited 50 years for this apology, and finally today I heard it,” Evelyn Korkmaz, a school survivor, said during a news conference. Unfortunately many family and community members did not live to see it due to suicide or substance-abuse, she said. But “I was hoping to hear some kind of work plan” for ways the church would be turning over documents and taking other concrete steps.

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“I have a lot of survivors and thrivers in my community who are happy to hear the pope has come to apologize. Words cannot describe how important today is for the healing journey for a lot of First Nations people,” Chief Vernon Saddleback of Samson Cree Nation said in a news conference. “The pope apologizing today was a day for everyone in the world to sit back and listen.”

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“It's something that is needed, not only for people to hear but for the church to be accountable,” said Sandi Harper of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, who attended the papal event in honor of her late mother, a former residential school student. Still, she told AP some Indigenous people are not ready for reconciliation: “We just need to give people the time to heal. It's going to take a long time.”

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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE
07/26 Discovery of new UEFI rootkit

SOURCE	<a href="https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2022/07/researchers-unpack-unkillable-uefi-rootkit-that-survives-os-reinstalls/">https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2022/07/researchers-unpack-unkillable-uefi-rootkit-that-survives-os-reinstalls/</a>
GIST	<p>Researchers have unpacked a major cybersecurity find—a malicious UEFI-based rootkit used in the wild since 2016 to ensure computers remained infected even if an operating system is reinstalled or a hard drive is completely replaced.</p> <p>The firmware compromises the UEFI, the low-level and highly opaque chain of firmware required to boot up nearly every modern computer. As the software that bridges a PC’s device firmware with its operating system, the UEFI—short for <a href="#">Unified Extensible Firmware Interface</a>—is an OS in its own right. It’s located in an <a href="#">SPI</a>-connected flash storage chip soldered onto the computer motherboard, making it difficult to inspect or patch the code. Because it’s the first thing to run when a computer is turned on, it influences the OS, security apps, and all other software that follows.</p> <p><b>Exotic, yes. Rare, no.</b></p> <p>On Monday, researchers from Kaspersky <a href="#">profiled CosmicStrand</a>, the security firm’s name for a sophisticated UEFI rootkit that the company detected and obtained through its antivirus software. The find is among only a handful of such UEFI threats known to have been used in the wild. Until recently, researchers assumed that the technical demands required to develop UEFI malware of this caliber put it out of reach of most threat actors. Now, with Kaspersky attributing CosmicStrand to an unknown Chinese-speaking hacking group with possible ties to cryptominer malware, this type of malware may not be so rare after all.</p> <p>“The most striking aspect of this report is that this UEFI implant seems to have been used in the wild since the end of 2016—long before UEFI attacks started being publicly described,” Kaspersky researchers wrote. “This discovery begs a final question: If this is what the attackers were using back then, what are they using today?”</p> <p>While researchers from fellow security firm Qihoo360 <a href="#">reported</a> on an earlier variant of the rootkit in 2017, Kaspersky and most other Western-based security firms didn’t take notice. Kaspersky’s newer research describes in detail how the rootkit—found in firmware images of some Gigabyte or Asus motherboards—is able to hijack the boot process of infected machines. The technical underpinnings attest to the sophistication of the malware.</p> <p>A rootkit is a piece of malware that runs in the deepest regions of the operating system it infects. It leverages this strategic position to hide information about its presence from the operating system itself. A bootkit, meanwhile, is malware that infects the boot process of a machine in order to persist on the system. The successor to legacy BIOS, UEFI is a technical standard defining how components can participate in the startup of an OS. It’s the most “recent” one, as it was introduced around 2006. Today, almost all devices support UEFI when it comes to the boot process. The key point here is that when we say something takes place at the UEFI level, it means that it happens when the computer is starting up, before the operating system has even been loaded. Whatever standard is being used during that process is only an implementation detail, and in 2022, it will almost always be UEFI anyway.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Data breach costs at record-high \$4.3M</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zdnet.com/article/data-breach-costs-record-4-3m-with-firms-passing-buck-to-customers/">https://www.zdnet.com/article/data-breach-costs-record-4-3m-with-firms-passing-buck-to-customers/</a>
GIST	<p>The average cost of a data security breach has hit another record-high of \$4.35 million per incident, growing 12.7% over the past two years. And some businesses are passing the buck to customers, even as the cost of products and services has climbed amidst inflation and supply chain constraints.</p> <p>This year's figure was up 2.6% from <a href="#">last year's \$4.24 million per breach</a>, according to IBM's 2022 Cost of Data Breach report, which further revealed that 83% of companies surveyed had experienced more than one data breach.</p>



Conducted by Ponemon Institute, the report analysed 550 organisations across 17 global markets that were impacted by data breaches between March 2021 and March 2022.

Just 17% said this was their first breach. In addition, 60% said they increased the price tag on their products and services due to losses suffered from the data breach. They also continued to chalk up losses long after the breach, where almost half of such costs were incurred more than a year after the incident.

Organisations in the US saw the highest average cost of a breach, which climbed 4.3% to \$9.44 million, followed by the Middle East region where the average cost clocked at \$7.46 million this year, up from \$6.93 million in 2021. Canada, the UK, and Germany rounded up the top five pack, chalking at average losses of \$5.64 million, \$5.05 million, and \$4.85 million per breach, respectively.

Six markets, including Japan, South Korea, and France, amongst the 17 markets analysed saw a dip in their respective average breach cost.

### **Supply chains, user credentials fuel attacks**

Across the board, companies took an average of 207 days to identify the breach and 70 days to contain it, down overall from last year's average of 212 days to identify and 75 days to contain the breach.

Some 19% of breaches were the result of [supply chain attacks](#), costing an average \$4.46 million and clocking a lifecycle of 26 days longer than the global average of 277 days, which measured the combined time to identify and contain a data breach. Supply chain breaches were due to a business partner being the initial point of compromise.

Human errors, which encompassed negligent actions of employees or external contractors, accounted for 21% of incidents, while IT failures--the result of disruption or failure in a company's IT systems that led to data loss--were behind 24% of breaches. The latter included errors in source codes or process failures, such as automated communication errors.

Some 11% of breaches were ransomware attacks, up from 7.8% last year and at a growth rate of 41%, but the average cost of such attacks dropped slightly to \$4.54 million from \$4.62 million in 2021.

Attacks from stolen or compromised credentials remained the most common cause of a data breach, accounting for 19% of all incidents this year, the report found. Breaches from stolen or compromised credentials cost an average \$4.5 million per incident and had the longest lifecycle of 243 days to identify and 84 days to contain the breach.

Phishing was the second-most common cause of a data breach, accounting for 16% for overall attacks, but the costliest with an average \$4.91 million in losses.

Amongst sectors, healthcare suffered a record-high average breach cost of \$10.1 million, up almost \$1 million from 2021 and sealing its ranking as the most expensive industry. In fact, the sector's breach costs had climbed 41.6% since 2020.

The financial services sector recorded the second-highest average breach cost of \$5.97 million, followed by pharmaceuticals, technology, and energy at \$5.01 million, \$4.97 million, and \$4.72 million, respectively.

The average breach cost for organisations running critical infrastructures was \$4.82 million, which was \$1 million more than the average cost for organisations in other sectors. Critical infrastructure companies were from sectors that included financial services, energy, transport, healthcare, and government.

Amongst these organisations, 28% experienced a destructive or ransomware attack and 17% pointed to a compromised supply chain partner.

### **Mitigating losses with touted security strategies**

The IBM study also studied differences in the impact of a data breach amongst companies that had and had not adopted security strategies and technologies, such as zero trust, extended detection and response (XDR), and artificial intelligence (AI).

The report noted that nearly 80% of critical infrastructure organisations without a [zero trust strategy](#) saw a higher average breach cost of \$5.4 million, or \$1.17 million more than those that adopted zero trust frameworks. Across the board, 41% of organisations said they had deployed a zero trust security framework, up from 35% last year, and the remaining 59% had not done likewise.

In addition, those that deployed [security AI and automation](#) tools saw lower breach costs that were \$3.05 million lower than their peers that did not implement any of such tools. They also took 74 days longer to identify and contain a breach than those that adopted security AI and automation technologies.

The number of organisations that used such tools hit 70% this year, up from 59% in 2020.

In addition, 43% of companies that were in the early stages or had yet to deploy [security practices across their cloud platforms](#) saw higher losses of at least \$660,000 on average than those that had mature cloud security environments.

Some 44% of breaches in the study happened in the cloud, with those occurring in a hybrid cloud environment costing an average \$3.8 million, compared to \$4.24 million for breaches in private clouds and \$5.02 million in public clouds.

At \$4.99 million per incident, [remote work-related breaches](#) also cost almost \$1 million more on average than breaches where remote work was not a factor.

Some 44% of companies had implemented XDR technologies and they saw shorter breach lifecycles of about a month, on average, compared to their peers that had not deployed such tools who took 304 days to identify and contain a breach.

Amongst organisations that suffered ransomware attacks, [those that paid up](#) clocked \$610,000 lower breach costs--excluding cost of ransom--compared to those that chose not to pay.

In addition, 62% of companies that said they were insufficiently staffed to support their cybersecurity needs saw an average \$550,000 higher breach costs than those that were adequately staffed.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Microsoft warns of stealthy backdoors</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zdnet.com/article/microsoft-warns-of-stealthy-backdoors-used-to-target-exchange-servers-email/">https://www.zdnet.com/article/microsoft-warns-of-stealthy-backdoors-used-to-target-exchange-servers-email/</a>
GIST	<p>There's been an uptick in malware native to Microsoft's Internet Information Services (IIS) web server that is being used to install backdoors or steal credentials and is hard to detect, warns Microsoft.</p> <p>Microsoft has offered insights into how to spot and remove malicious IIS extensions, which aren't as <a href="#">popular as web shells</a> as a payload for Exchange servers, but are useful to an attacker as they "mostly reside in the same directories as legitimate modules used by target applications, and they follow the same code structure as clean modules," <a href="#">Microsoft notes</a>.</p> <p>As such, they might not be seen as malicious and identifying the source of an infection can be difficult. Key target IIS-hosted applications are Outlook on the Web and Microsoft Exchange Server, which, if compromised, can give an attacker complete access to a target's email communications.</p> <p>Security company ESET last year <a href="#">found</a> 80 unique malicious IIS modules belonging to 14 malware families, most of which were previously undocumented. These included IIS backdoors, info stealers, injectors, proxies for C&amp;C infrastructure, and modules that fraudulently modify content served to search</p>

engines. In all cases, the IIS malware intercepted HTTP requests incoming from the compromised IIS server and affected how the server responds to certain requests.

Microsoft says IIS extension attacks typically start by the attacker exploiting a critical flaw in the hosted application and then drop a web shell. At some point after deploying the web shell, the attacker installs an IIS backdoor for stealthy, persistent access to the server.

In a campaign targeting Exchange servers between January and May 2022, Microsoft saw attackers installing customized IIS modules.

"Once registered with the target application, the backdoor can monitor incoming and outgoing requests and perform additional tasks, such as running remote commands or dumping credentials in the background as the user authenticates to the web application," Microsoft explains.

Between March and June 2021, ESET observed a wave of IIS backdoors spread via the Exchange ProxyLogon pre-authentication remote code execution vulnerabilities ([CVE-2021-26855](#), [CVE-2021-26857](#), [CVE-2021-26858](#), and [CVE-2021-27065](#)).

"Targeted specifically were Exchange servers that have *Outlook on the web* (aka OWA) enabled – as IIS is used to implement OWA, these were a particularly interesting target for espionage," ESET noted.

Microsoft provides incident response teams with details about how IIS works and the types of attacks it's seen, so customers can defend against them. Microsoft expects attackers will increasingly use IIS backdoors in future.

IIS is a modular web server that is a core part of the Windows platform. Users can customize IIS web servers as needed using extensions written in native (C/C++) and managed (C#, VB.NET) code structures. Microsoft focusses on C#, VB.NET extensions.

Microsoft's technical rundown of how attackers use customer IIS backdoors cover command runs, credential access, remote access and exfiltration.

The main malicious .NET IIS extensions over the past year included: [web shells used by the likes of Hafnium/China Chopper](#), the Chinese state-sponsored group exploiting Exchange zero-days; open-source IIS backdoor GitHub projects that are intended for red team exercises and lifted by attackers for their activity; IIS handlers that can be configured to respond to certain extensions or requests; and credential stealers, which monitor for specific requests to determine a sign-in activity.

Besides applying all software updates and running antivirus, Microsoft recommends reviewing highly privileged account groups like admins, remote desktop users, and enterprise admins. It also recommends enabling multi-factor authentication, restricting access to what's needed, and avoiding the use of domain-wide, admin-level service accounts.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Fallout surges Shanghai police data breach</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cyberscoop.com/shanghai-data-breach-1-billion-dark-web/">https://www.cyberscoop.com/shanghai-data-breach-1-billion-dark-web/</a>
GIST	<p>The availability of supposedly hacked Chinese data on the dark web appears to have surged in recent weeks on the heels of the massive Shanghai National Police breach, which was one of the largest ever recorded.</p> <p>There were an average of 14 monthly leaks from Chinese entities posted to BreachForums between March and June, according to Naomi Yusupov, a Chinese intelligence analyst at threat intelligence firm Cybersixgill. But in the first 15 days of July, the total jumped to 25, setting a pace for more than 50, Yusupov reported <a href="#">in findings published Thursday</a>.</p>

The surge in activity is just one piece of the fallout after a BreachForums user named ChinaDan posted on June 30 what they said was nearly 23 terabytes of data gathered by the Shanghai National Police. The database contained information on roughly 1 billion residents of China, and “several billion case records,” the original post said, and was for sale for 10 bitcoin (roughly \$200,000).

The surge in Chinese data posted to the forum came alongside “a significant increase in the quantity of Chinese-language activity on the predominantly English-speaking forum,” Yusupov reported. Other users on the site complained to the forum’s administrators, and the administrators took action.

“Hello, dear Chinese users, welcome to our forum,” a site administrator said in a message posted July 8. The Shanghai database was no longer being sold, the message said, and “posts related to this topic have been deleted.” The Chinese users were welcome to stay, but they were asked not to post Chinese characters, and to use translation software to talk to others.

Yusupov concluded that the massive breach may have encouraged others with Chinese data to bring it to the forum to sell. One user, who joined after the June 30 post of the Shanghai police data, shared a leaked “police database from 2016 as a meeting gift,” and promised additional data in the coming days.

ChinaDan offered a sample of 750,000 users as part of the June 30 post, which itself “could have been keys to hacking and social engineering attacks to extract information from additional databases,” Yusupov concluded. “We anticipate that we will be seeing the reverberations of this breach on the underground for quite some time.”

Yusupov added that the increased Chinese activity on the forum was “notable, as the Chinese and English underground are generally separate communities. It is worth following up on this incident to [gauge] if it leads to increased communication and collaboration between these two groups.”

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Spear phishing targets Facebook accounts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hackread.com/ducktail-malware-linked-in-facebook-hack-business-accounts/">https://www.hackread.com/ducktail-malware-linked-in-facebook-hack-business-accounts/</a>
GIST	<p>WithSecure (previously F-Secure) researchers have revealed details of a new <a href="#">spear phishing campaign</a> targeting Facebook business accounts. The campaign has been active since at least July 2021.</p> <p>The attack, according to researchers, entails using an infostealer dubbed Ducktail designed for <a href="#">stealing browser cookies</a> for authentic Facebook sessions and information from the Facebook account. The objective is to hijack every business account the victim can access.</p> <p><b>Who are the Targets of Ducktail?</b></p> <p>According to WithSecure, Ducktail malware targets those “individuals and organizations” using Facebook Ads and Business services. People involved in digital marketing, managerial jobs, human resources, and digital media are the prime targets.</p> <p>The Modus Operandi of the campaign involves attackers locating targets through LinkedIn and delivering malware. WithSecure researcher Mohammad Kazem Hassan Nejad wrote the report and stated that most spear phishing campaigns <a href="#">target people via LinkedIn</a>.</p> <p>“If you are in a role that has admin access to corporate social media accounts, it is important to exercise caution when interacting with others on social media platforms, especially when dealing with attachments or links sent from individuals you are unfamiliar with.”</p> <p><i>Mohammad Kazem Hassan Nejad – WithSecure</i></p> <p><b>Who’s the Attacker?</b></p> <p>Researchers are confident that a <a href="#">Vietnam-based threat actor</a> conducts this financially driven campaign. They detected this campaign earlier in 2022. They believe there’s no specific sector or geographic target at the moment. However, the malware has been continuously updated and modified since the second quarter of 2021. However, the threat actor has been active since 2018.</p>

### How does the Scam work?

According to WithSecure's [report](#), malware samples were hosted on Cloud services such as MediaFire, iCloud, and Dropbox. The malware is delivered to the targeted individuals through LinkedIn as they usually have Facebook business accounts.

Ducktail malware is written in .NET Core and compiled in a single file so its binary can run despite the .NET runtime on the victim's computer. The attacker can use Telegram for C&C by embedding [Telegram.Bot](#) client and other external dependencies in one executable.

Ducktail ensures a single instance runs at all times and keeps scanning for installed browsers to identify cookie paths. Ducktail can collect general information and [steals Facebook-related data](#), which is then exfiltrated to Telegram in several scenarios, such as after the hijacking, when the code loop is completed, or when the process crashes/exits.

Ducktail's new versions run an infinite loop in the background that enables continuous exfiltration of new updates and cookies from the victim's Facebook account to interact with it and create an email ID with admin access and finance editor roles, controlled by the attacker.

That's how the attacker gets full control over the account and edits business credit cards or other financial details such as transactions, payment methods, etc.

### Protection from Ducktail Malware

The best way to protect yourself from Ducktail malware is to be vigilant about opening emails and attachments from unknown senders and avoiding clicking on links in email messages.

Avoid clicking links or downloading attachments sent by anonymous users through the LinkedIn chat feature or [Facebook Messenger](#). You should also always use strong passwords and two-factor authentication whenever possible.

You should also keep your device updated with the latest security patches to reduce your risk of being infected with Ducktail or any other malware.

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HEADLINE	07/26 New Android malware apps: 10M installs
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-android-malware-apps-installed-10-million-times-from-google-play/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-android-malware-apps-installed-10-million-times-from-google-play/</a>
GIST	<p>A new batch of malicious Android apps filled with adware and malware was found on the Google Play Store that have been installed close to 10 million times on mobile devices.</p> <p>The apps pose as image-editing tools, virtual keyboards, system optimizers, wallpaper changers, and more. However, their underlying functionality is to push intrusive ads, subscribe users to premium services, and steal victims' social media accounts.</p> <p>The discovery of these malicious apps comes from the Dr. Web antivirus team, who highlighted the new threats in a report published today.</p> <p>Google has removed the vast majority of the presented applications, but at the time of writing this, three applications remain available for download and installation via the Play Store.</p> <p>Also, if you installed any of these apps before their removal from the Play Store, you will still need to uninstall them from your device manually and run an AV scan to clean any remnants.</p> <p><b>The new malicious Android apps</b></p>

The adware apps discovered by Dr. Web are modifications of existing families that first appeared on the Google Play Store in May 2022.

Upon installation, the apps request permission to overlay windows over any app and can add themselves to the battery saver's exclusion list so they can continue running in the background when the victim closes the app.

Additionally, they hide their icons from the app drawer or replace them with something resembling a core system component, like "SIM Toolkit".

The full list of adware apps can be found at the bottom of the article, but one notable example still on the Play Store is 'Neon Theme Keyboard,' which has over a million downloads despite the 1.8-star score and many negative reviews.

"This app "killed" my phone. It keep'd crashing , i couldn't even enter password to unlock phone and uninstall it. Eventually, I had to make a complete wipe out (factory reset), to regain phone. DO NOT , install this app !!!," read a review of the app on the Google Play Store.

The second category of malicious apps found on the Play Store is Joker apps, known for incurring fraudulent charges on victims' mobile numbers by subscribing them to premium services.

Two of the listed apps, 'Water Reminder' and 'Yoga – For Beginner to Advanced,' are still on the Play Store, having 100,000 and 50,000 downloads, respectively.

Both provide the promised functionality, but they also perform malicious actions in the background, interacting with invisible or out-of-focus elements loaded via WebView and burdening the users with charges.

Finally, [Dr. Web highlights](#) two Facebook account stealers distributed in image editing tools that apply cartoon filters over regular images.

These apps are 'YouToon – AI Cartoon Effect' and 'Pista – Cartoon Photo Effect,' which have been collectively downloaded over 1.5 million times via the Play Store.

BleepingComputer has contacted Google about the malicious apps remaining on the Play Store but has not heard back at this time.

### **Staying safe on the Google Play Store**

Android malware will always find a way to creep into the Google Play Store, and sometimes apps [can stay there for several months](#), so you should not blindly trust any app can blindly trust no apps.

Due to this, it is vital to check user reviews and ratings, visit the developer's website, read the privacy policy, and pay attention to the requested permissions during installation.

Additionally, always ask yourself if the promised functionality is necessary to you, as keeping the number of apps on your phone at a minimum is a reliable way to reduce the chances of malware infections.

Finally, ensure that Play Protect is active on your device and regularly monitor your internet data and battery consumption to identify any suspicious processes that run in the background.

As previously stated, users should also check to see if they have any of the following Android adware apps install on their devices, and if found, manually remove them and scan for viruses.

- Photo Editor: Beauty Filter (gb.artfilter.tenvarnist)
- Photo Editor: Retouch & Cutout (de.nineergysh.quickarttwo)
- Photo Editor: Art Filters (gb.painnt.moonlightingnine)
- Photo Editor - Design Maker (gb.twentynine.redaktoridea)



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Photo Editor &amp; Background Eraser (de.photoground.twentysixshot)</li> <li>▪ Photo &amp; Exif Editor (de.xnano.photoexifeditornine)</li> <li>▪ Photo Editor - Filters Effects (de.hitopgop.sixtyeightgx)</li> <li>▪ Photo Filters &amp; Effects (de.sixtyonecollice.cameraroll)</li> <li>▪ Photo Editor : Blur Image (de.instgang.fiftyggfife)</li> <li>▪ Photo Editor : Cut, Paste (de.fiftyninecamera.rollredactor)</li> <li>▪ Emoji Keyboard: Stickers &amp; GIF (gb.crazykey.sevenboard)</li> <li>▪ Neon Theme Keyboard (com.neonthemekeyboard.app)</li> <li>▪ Neon Theme - Android Keyboard (com.androidneonkeyboard.app)</li> <li>▪ Cashe Cleaner (com.cachecleanereasytool.app)</li> <li>▪ Fancy Charging (com.fancyanimatedbattery.app)</li> <li>▪ FastCleaner: Cashe Cleaner (com.fastcleanercashecleaner.app)</li> <li>▪ Call Skins - Caller Themes (com.rockskinthemes.app)</li> <li>▪ Funny Caller (com.funnycallercustomtheme.app)</li> <li>▪ CallMe Phone Themes (com.callercallwallpaper.app)</li> <li>▪ InCall: Contact Background (com.mycallcustomcallscrean.app)</li> <li>▪ MyCall - Call Personalization (com.mycallcallpersonalization.app)</li> <li>▪ Caller Theme (com.caller.theme.slow)</li> <li>▪ Caller Theme (com.callertheme.firstref)</li> <li>▪ Funny Wallpapers - Live Screen (com.funnywallpapaerslive.app)</li> <li>▪ 4K Wallpapers Auto Changer (de.andromo.ssiftylivesixcc)</li> <li>▪ NewScreen: 4D Wallpapers (com.newscreen4dwallpapers.app)</li> <li>▪ Stock Wallpapers &amp; Backgrounds (de.stockeighty.onewallpapers)</li> <li>▪ Notes - reminders and lists (com.notesreminderslists.app)</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Vulnerabilities scan in 15min. of disclosure</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-scan-for-vulnerabilities-within-15-minutes-of-disclosure/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-scan-for-vulnerabilities-within-15-minutes-of-disclosure/</a>
GIST	<p>System administrators have even less time to patch disclosed security vulnerabilities than previously thought, as a new report shows threat actors scanning for vulnerable endpoints within 15 minutes of a new CVE being publicly disclosed.</p> <p>According to Palo Alto's 2022 Unit 42 <a href="#">Incident Response Report</a>, hackers are constantly monitoring software vendor bulletin boards for new vulnerability announcements they can leverage for initial access to a corporate network or to perform remote code execution.</p> <p>However, the speed at which threat actors begin scanning for vulnerabilities puts system administrators in the crosshairs as they race to patch the bugs before they are exploited.</p> <p>"The 2022 Attack Surface Management Threat Report found that attackers typically start scanning for vulnerabilities within 15 minutes of a CVE being announced," reads a companion <a href="#">blog post</a>.</p> <p>Since scanning isn't particularly demanding, even low-skilled attackers can scan the internet for vulnerable endpoints and sell their findings on dark web markets where more capable hackers know how to exploit them.</p> <p>Then, within hours, the first active exploitation attempts are observed, often hitting systems that never had the chance to patch.</p> <p>Unit 42 presents <a href="#">CVE-2022-1388</a> as an example, a critical unauthenticated remote command execution vulnerability impacting F5 BIG-IP products.</p> <p>The flaw was disclosed on May 4, 2022, and according to Unit 42, by the time ten hours had passed since the announcement of the CVE, they had recorded 2,552 scanning and exploitation attempts.</p>

This is a race between defenders and malicious actors, and the margins for delays on either side are dwindling with every year that passes.

### **Most exploited flaws in 2022**

Based on the data collected by Palo Alto, the most exploited vulnerabilities for network access in H1 2022 are [the “ProxyShell” exploit chain](#), accounting for 55% of the total recorded exploitation incidents. ProxyShell is an attack exploited by chaining together three vulnerabilities tracked as CVE-2021-34473, CVE-2021-34523, and CVE-2021-31207.

Log4Shell follows at second place with 14%, various SonicWall CVEs accounted for 7%, ProxyLogon had 5%, while the RCE in [Zoho ManageEngine ADSelfService Plus](#) was exploited in 3% of the cases.

As it becomes evident from these stats, the lion’s share in the exploitation volume is captured by semi-old flaws and not the most recent ones.

This happens for various reasons, including the attack surface size, exploitation complexity, and practical impact.

More valuable and better-protected systems whose admins are quick to apply security updates are targeted with zero-days or attacks that unfold immediately after the disclosure of flaws.

It is also worth noting that according to Unit 42, exploiting software vulnerabilities for initial network breaches accounts for roughly one-third of the method used.

In 37% of the cases, phishing was the preferable means for achieving initial access. Brute-forcing or using compromised credentials is how hackers penetrated networks in 15% of the cases.

Finally, using social engineering tricks against privileged employees or bribing a rogue insider to aid in network access corresponds to 10% of the incidents.

### **A race against the clock**

With system administrators, network admins, and security professionals already under significant stress as they try to keep up with the latest security threats and OS issues, the speed at which threat actors target their devices only adds additional pressure.

Therefore, it is extremely important to keep devices off the Internet if possible, and only expose them through VPNs or other security gateways. By restricting access to servers, admins not only reduce the risk of exploits, but provide additional time to apply security updates before the vulnerabilities could be targeted internally.

Unfortunately, some services must be publicly exposed, requiring admins to tighten security as much as possible through access lists, exposing only the necessary ports and services, and applying updates as quickly as possible.

While quickly applying a critical update may lead to downtime, this is much better than the ramifications of a full-blown cyberattack.

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HEADLINE	07/26 Microsoft tops brands phishers prefer
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/microsoft-tops-brands-phishers-prefer">https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/microsoft-tops-brands-phishers-prefer</a>
GIST	Microsoft is the most popular brand targeted for phishing attack abuse, followed by Facebook, Crédit Agricole, WhatsApp, and Orange, according to newly released research.

	<p>The team at Vade has put together its "Phishers' Favorites" report for the first half of 2022. The report names Microsoft as the brand of choice for lures because of widespread use of Microsoft 365 applications by businesses of all sizes, as well as the veritable buffet of possible attacks a threat actor could launch for a compromised account, including ransomware, business email compromise (BEC), and more.</p> <p>Additional findings in the phishing attack overview shows financial services is the most targeted sector for <a href="#">phishing attacks</a>, with cloud, e-commerce/logistics, telecom, and social media following just behind.</p> <p>"Detecting phishing emails is difficult not only for users but also for security vendors," the <a href="#">phishing report</a> explains. "As the sophistication of attacks increases, so does the likelihood that a costly attack will bypass security and land in an inbox."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Discord, Telegram hijacked for attacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/application-security/discord-telegram-hijacked-cyberattacks">https://www.darkreading.com/application-security/discord-telegram-hijacked-cyberattacks</a>
GIST	<p>Threat actors have figured out how to use the existing functionality and infrastructure of popular messaging apps such as Telegram and Discord to host, launch, and execute a variety of malware, as shown by ongoing, dangerous campaigns.</p> <p>From bots that enable games and content sharing, to robust content delivery networks (CDNs) ideal for hosting malicious files, these platforms are helping fuel a surge of new attacks, according to the security research team at Intel 471.</p> <p>Most often, the malware is used along with easily acquired infostealers to prey on unsuspecting users and steal their credentials, auto-filled data, payment card information, and more.</p> <p>"Using messaging platforms, such as Telegram and Discord, allows threat actors to hide in plain view," John Bambenek, principal threat hunter at Netenrich, explains to Dark Reading. "Many people already use these applications so you can't just block them (though you may be able to block API access to those services in an enterprise environment). And there is no a large team administering those platforms so they are not staffed to monitor channels and servers for criminal misuse."</p> <p><b>CDNs Abused to Host Malware</b></p> <p>Some attackers have found success using CDNs like Discord's to host their malware, which the analysts point out has no restrictions for file hosting.</p> <p>"The links are open to any users without authentication, giving threat actors a highly reputable web domain to host malicious payloads," according to the report on messaging app threats. PrivateLoader, Discoloader, Agent Tesla stealer, and <a href="#">Smokeloader</a> are just a few of the malware families the researchers found lurking in Discord's CDN.</p> <p><b>Telegram Bots Swipe OTP Tokens</b></p> <p>Although the tactic isn't new, 471 analysts point out an emerging threat group, Astro OTP. It's actively using Telegram bots to steal one-time-password (OTP) tokens and SMS message verification codes used for two-factor authentication.</p> <p>"The operator allegedly could control the bot directly through the Telegram interface by executing simple commands," the report explains. "Access to the bot is extremely cheap, a one-day subscription can be bought for \$25, with a lifetime subscription available for \$300."</p> <p>The threat from this tactic lasts far beyond the initial compromise The Intel 471 team warn that gathering compromised credentials and other information can be a critical precursor to a devastating enterprise attack.</p>

	<p>It's up to users to be aware of the security of messaging platforms they use, the <a href="#">471 researchers</a> say, adding that enterprise security teams should take the time to protect against these types of messaging application man-in-the-middle attacks.</p> <p>"Whether these actors are stealing credentials for further sales or bypassing verification codes to gain unauthorized access into a victim's bank account, the ease by which threat actors can obtain this information should serve as a warning," Michael DeBolt, chief intelligence officer at Intel 471, tells Dark Reading about his research team's findings. "Security teams should institute token-based multi-factor authentication wherever possible, and educate their user base on what possible scams stemming from these automated schemes can look like."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 LockBit 3.0 significantly improved</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/lockbit-3.0-improved-malware-gang-top">https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/lockbit-3.0-improved-malware-gang-top</a>
GIST	<p>Reverse-engineering the latest ransomware executables from the group behind LockBit shows that the developers have added capabilities from other popular attack tools and are actively working to improve LockBit's anti-analysis capabilities, according to researchers.</p> <p>This significant evolution, seen in the <a href="#">recently debuted LockBit 3.0</a> (aka LockBit Black), is likely meant to offset better defenses, a greater scrutiny by researchers and investigators, and competition from other gangs, according to analyses by multiple researchers.</p> <p>"There is no question that, whether it is law enforcement pressure or the defenders getting better, that we are seeing that these groups are forced to evolve — they have to get better at what they are doing," says Jon Clay, vice president of threat intelligence for Trend Micro.</p> <p>They also have to keep up with the Dark-Web Joneses. To that end, the latest version now requires a key to obfuscate its main routines and hinders reverse engineering and analysis, for example — a technique used by other ransomware families, such as Egregor, cybersecurity firm Trend Micro stated in an advisory published on Tuesday. The new version of the ransomware program also enumerates available application programming interfaces (APIs), a feature identical to the BlackMatter ransomware program, the company stated.</p> <p><b>Ransomware Attack on Italy's Tax Agency</b></p> <p>Earlier this month, the Italian Revenue Agency <a href="#">became the latest purported victim of LockBit</a>, with the group boasting that it encrypted and exfiltrated 78 gigabytes of files from the tax agency. If true, the organization will have to find a way to recover, but the attack also threatens Italian citizens, Gil Dabah, co-founder and CEO of data-protection firm Piiano, said via email.</p> <p>"The second type of victim is the individual whose data was compromised," he said. "In this case, there is a high chance that the data of an individual taxpayer was compromised."</p> <p>Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, these ransomware groups have committed to supporting Russia and are increasingly facing requests to conduct operations against nation-state targets, says Paul Martini, CEO of iBoss, a provider of cloud-security solutions.</p> <p>"The shadow cyber-war between nations that has been carried out through espionage, disinformation campaigns, and strategic attacks on critical targets is just starting to come out of the shadows," he said. "We can expect this to boil over and the West is going to need stronger defenses in place to protect government and civilian targets."</p> <p>The group behind LockBit has had a good run so far in 2022. Despite an 18% drop in overall attacks, likely due to the <a href="#">disruption of the infrastructure behind the Conti cybercrime group</a> or <a href="#">possibly fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine</a>, LockBit has become the most commonly encountered ransomware family, <a href="#">accounting for 40% of all attacks</a> detected by security firm NCC Group in May.</p>

But evolution is necessary to stay on top.

### Major Improvements for LockBit 3.0

The changes to the latest version of the LockBit ransomware includes functions that collect system APIs as a way to use legitimate functions as part of its attack and extensive — albeit fairly simple — encryption of configuration data and code, [according to Trend Micro's advisory](#).

Perhaps most notably, a major addition to LockBit 3.0 is a set of features to slow down or prevent reverse engineering. The program includes, for example, a password required to decrypt the main body of executable code and a feature that attempts to crash debuggers.

"They pride themselves on their ability to regularly update their ransomware and ransomware-as-a-service offerings," says Trend Micro's Clay. "There are a lot more obfuscation capabilities in 3.0, and they put in a lot of features that try to minimize how much analysts and researchers can discover about their code."

Meanwhile, the adoption of BlackMatter tactics is unsurprising, given that both LockBit and BlackMatter are Russia-linked groups and cybercriminals are increasingly moving between groups.

### The Basics of Ransomware Defense Still Work

For the most part, the new features found in LockBit 3.0 do not undermine current defenses, says Trend Micro's Clay. Multi-factor authentication can block the most common approach to gaining access — through stolen credentials — while modern endpoint detection and response (EDR) can detect and stop and attack before attackers start encrypting data. Finally, having a good backup process for critical data will make recovery easier.

"They [ransomware groups] claim that backups will not help, but if you have a proper procedure then you can recover your data," he says. "The good news is that the defenders have implemented a lot of these best practices, and they seem to be working."

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HEADLINE	07/26 Higher risk insiders going rogue?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/risk/economic-downturn-raises-the-risk-of-insiders-going-rogue">https://www.darkreading.com/risk/economic-downturn-raises-the-risk-of-insiders-going-rogue</a>
GIST	<p>Declining economic conditions could make insiders more susceptible to recruitment offers from threat actors looking for allies to assist them in carrying out various attacks.</p> <p>Enterprise security teams need to be aware of the heightened risk and strengthen measures for protecting against, detecting, and responding to insider threats, researchers from Palo Alto Network's Unit 42 threat intelligence team recommended in a report this week.</p> <p>The security vendor's report highlighted several other important takeaways for security operations teams, including the fact that ransomware and business email compromise attacks continue to dominate incident response cases and vulnerability exploits — accounting for nearly one-third of all breaches.</p> <h4>Vulnerable Insiders</h4> <p>Unit 42 researchers analyzed data from a sampling of over 600 incident response engagements between April 2021 and May 2022 and determined that <a href="#">difficult economic times could lure more actors</a> to cybercrime. This could include both people with technical skills looking to make a fast buck, as well as financially stressed insiders with legitimate access to valuable enterprise data and IT assets. The prevalence of remote and hybrid work models has created an environment where it's easier for workers to steal intellectual property or carry out other malicious activity, the researchers found.</p> <p>Palo Alto Networks' report points to how some threat actors — such as the highly destructive LAPSUS\$ group — have attempted to recruit insiders by offering money for access credentials or for</p>

helping them carry out their attack in other ways. "When some people are struggling to make ends meet, [such] offers could be more tempting to some," the report said.

This trend has been flagged before: A report from Flashpoint in May noted the [growing popularity of insider recruitment efforts](#) among threat actors. Flashpoint counted as many as 3,988 unique insider-related chat discussions — primarily on Telegram — between Jan. 1 and Nov. 30, 2021, with a particularly sharp spike happening after August. Many of those attempting to recruit were ransomware operators or other extortion groups. Commonly employed tactics included using a known insider or running public recruitment advertisements and direct solicitation.

Another survey that Pulse and Hitachi ID conducted of 100 IT and security professionals showed [65% saying that threat actors had approached them](#) or their employees for assistance with a ransomware attack over the past year.

### **Phishing, Software Vulns Remain Major Initial Access Vectors**

Unit 42's research also confirmed what security teams fighting on the front lines to keep their organizations safe already know: Ransomware and BEC attacks continue to dominate the need for incident response. A startling 70% of intrusions were tied to one of these two causes. In BEC attacks, the data showed that threat actors typically spent between 7 and 48 days in the breached environment before the victim contained the threat, with a median dwell time of 38 days. The median dwell time for ransomware attacks was slightly lower, at 28 days, likely because of how noisy these attacks are.

Phishing continues to be the top vector for initial access so far in 2022, and was the suspected cause in 37% of the incident response cases that Unit 42 completed between April 2021 and May 2022.

"Unfortunately, most organizations learn about one of these attacks the hard way — upon receiving an extortion demand or after wire fraud is committed," says Dan O'Day, consulting director, Unit 42 at Palo Alto Networks. "Increasingly, threat actors quickly gain access, identify and exfiltrate sensitive data, and deploy extortion tactics — sometimes in a matter of hours or in just a few days."

Notably, 31% — or nearly one-in-three intrusions — resulted from attackers gaining an initial foothold via a software vulnerability. Some 87% of the vulnerabilities that Unit 42 researchers were able to positively identify fell into one of six categories: [ProxyLogon](#) and [ProxyShell](#) flaws in Exchange Server; the [Apache Log4j flaw](#); and vulnerabilities in technologies from Zoho, SonicWall and Fortinet. In 55% of incidents where Unit 42 was able to positively identify the vulnerability that an attacker used to gain initial access, the vulnerability was ProxyShell, and in 14% of the cases it was Log4j.

"Because one-third of attacks target software vulnerabilities, security teams should continue to patch vulnerabilities early and often," says O'Day. While some threat actors continue to rely on older, unpatched vulnerabilities, others are looking to exploit new vulnerabilities increasingly quickly. "In fact, it can practically coincide with the reveal if the vulnerabilities themselves and the access that can be achieved by exploiting them are significant enough," he says.

As one example, he points to a threat prevention signature that Palo Alto Networks released for an authentication bypass vulnerability in F5 Big IP technology (CVE-2022-1388). "Within just 10 hours, the signature triggered 2,552 times due to vulnerability scanning and active exploitation attempts," he says. "More and more, we're seeing attackers scanning as soon as details of a critical vulnerability are published."

Poor patch management practices exacerbated the issue for many organizations — it contributed to 28% of the breaches that Unit 42 responded to. One example of poor patch management is simply waiting too long to implement a patch for a known vulnerability, O'Day notes. "Further, around 30% of organizations were running end-of-life software versions that were affected by CVEs that had known active exploits in the wild and were featured in cybersecurity advisories from the US government."



HEADLINE	07/26 US doubles reward for tips NKorea hackers
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-doubles-reward-for-tips-on-north-korean-backed-hackers/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-doubles-reward-for-tips-on-north-korean-backed-hackers/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. State Department has increased rewards paid to anyone providing information on any North Korean-sponsored threat groups' members to \$10 million.</p> <p>"If you have information on any individuals associated with the North Korean government-linked malicious cyber groups (such as Andariel, APT38, Bluenoroff, Guardians of Peace, Kimsuky, or Lazarus Group) and who are involved in targeting U.S. critical infrastructure in violation of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, you may be eligible for a reward," the Department revealed Tuesday.</p> <p>These increased bounties add to rewards of up to \$5 million announced by the State Department <a href="#">in March</a> for info on DPRK-backed threat actors targeting crypto exchanges and financial institutions worldwide to support the North Korean regime's illicit activities.</p> <p>One month later, the FBI linked the largest crypto hack ever to two North Korean hacking groups, Lazarus and BlueNorOff (aka APT38), saying they were responsible for <a href="#">the theft of \$620 million in Ethereum</a> from Axie Infinity's Ronin network bridge.</p> <p>Two years ago, in April 2020, the U.S. government issued guidance on North Korean hacking activity in a joint advisory published by the U.S. Department of State, Treasury, Homeland Security, and the FBI.</p> <p>At the time, the State Department added in a <a href="#">DPRK Cyber Threat Advisory</a> that it would reward any tips on North Korean hackers' cyber activity with up to \$5 million if it leads to their identification or location or the disruption of DPRK-related illicit activities.</p> <p><b>North Korean malicious activity</b></p> <p>Cyber-theft and espionage campaigns targeting financial institutions and digital currency exchanges have been attributed to multiple North Korean hacking groups in the past.</p> <p>"They develop and deploy a wide range of malware tools around the world to enable these activities and have grown increasingly sophisticated," the State Department said.</p> <p>As part of their malicious activity, the U.S. government has previously said that Pyongyang-linked hackers have used various tactics to raise revenue illicitly, including cyber-enabled financial theft and money laundering, crypto-jacking campaigns, and extortion operations.</p> <p><a href="#">Three Lazarus Group members</a> were charged in the U.S. in February 2021 for stealing \$1.3 billion in attacks targeting banks, the entertainment industry, cryptocurrency companies, and other organizations worldwide.</p> <p>In 2019, the <a href="#">U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned three North Korean hacking groups</a> (Lazarus Group, Bluenoroff, and Andariel) for funneling financial assets they stole in cyberattacks to the North Korean government.</p> <p><a href="#">A confidential United Nations report also revealed the same year</a> that North Korean state hackers had stolen an estimated \$2 billion in dozens of cyberattacks targeting banks and crypto exchanges worldwide.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/25 Hackers turn to sophisticated BEC scams
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nextgov.com/cybersecurity/2022/07/hackers-use-more-sophisticated-scams-drive-costly-data-breaches-analysis-finds/374906/">https://www.nextgov.com/cybersecurity/2022/07/hackers-use-more-sophisticated-scams-drive-costly-data-breaches-analysis-finds/374906/</a>
GIST	Data breaches targeting business emails are the most financially lucrative for criminals, costing victims more than \$7.5 billion from 2017-2021, according to a five-year analysis of data from the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center—or IC3—conducted by <a href="#">Forbes Advisor</a> .

These reported breaches included both business email compromises and email account compromises—BECs/EACs—and impacted 94,814 victims in total over the reviewed time period.

According to the IC3's [2021 Internet Crime Report](#), BEC/EAC scams continue to evolve as criminals become more sophisticated in response to preventative cybersecurity measures. Rather than just spoofing email addresses and asking recipients to wire funds to bank accounts, fraudsters are now using third-party platforms to add a veneer of legitimacy to their requests after compromising email accounts.

“These schemes historically involved compromised vendor emails, requests for W-2 information, targeting of the real estate sector and fraudulent requests for large amounts of gift cards,” the IC3 report said. “Now, fraudsters are using virtual meeting platforms to hack emails and spoof business leaders’ credentials to initiate the fraudulent wire transfers.”

IC3 attributed the rise in BEC/EAC data breaches through virtual meeting services to the increase in teleworking, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. By compromising the email accounts of senior staffers who would typically request employees to participate in virtual meetings, criminals were able to deceive employees into sending them money.

“In those meetings, the fraudster would insert a still picture of the CEO with no audio, or a “deep fake” audio through which fraudsters, acting as business executives, would then claim their audio/video was not working properly,” the IC3 report said. “The fraudsters would then use the virtual meeting platforms to directly instruct employees to initiate wire transfers or use the executives’ compromised email to provide wiring instructions.”

The IC3 report noted that these fraudulently obtained funds are “often immediately transferred to cryptocurrency wallets and quickly dispersed, making recovery efforts more difficult.”

From 2017-2021, the Forbes Advisor analysis found that data breaches impacted more than 2 million Americans and resulted in almost \$20 billion in financial losses. While these breaches happened all across the country, California residents [suffered the most data breaches](#) over the five-year period, with a reported total of 325,291 victims losing more than \$3.7 billion. Almost one-third of the money stolen from data breach victims in California, approximately \$1.2 billion, came from compromised business emails and email accounts.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Malware volume rises first time in 3yrs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/global-malware-increase-first-time/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/global-malware-increase-first-time/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Global ransomware volumes shrunk by 23% year-on-year (YoY) in the first half of 2022, but overall malware surged by 11% over the period, according to new data from SonicWall.</p> <p>The mid-year <a href="#">update</a> to the firm’s 2022 <i>SonicWall Cyber Threat Report</i> is based on analysis of one million security sensors over 200 countries, as well as third-party sources.</p> <p>The 2.8 billion malware attacks detected in the first half of 2022 represents the first recorded growth in global malware volumes in three years, according to SonicWall.</p> <p>Although ransomware volumes dipped to 236 million, they surged in Europe (63%), which also saw a 29% YoY increase in overall malware attacks.</p> <p>“As bad actors diversify their tactics, and look to expand their attack vectors, we expect global ransomware volume to climb – not only in the next six months, but in the years to come,” said SonicWall CEO and president, Bill Conner.</p>

	<p>“With so much turmoil in the geopolitical landscape, cybercrime is increasingly becoming more sophisticated and varying in the threats, tools, targets and locations.”</p> <p>There was also a major increase in encrypted threats designed to evade detection (132%) by using HTTPS tunnels, and of threats targeting IoT systems (77%). Real recorded volumes were 4.9 million and 57 million respectively.</p> <p>SonicWall detected 270,228 never-before seen malware variants, a 45% increase on the same period in 2021, which could pose problems to organizations without advanced detection software.</p> <p>The financial services sector appears to be among the hardest hit so far this year. It faced a 100% increase in malware attacks, a 243% surge in ransomware attempts and a massive 269% increase in cryptojacking attempts. However, these are not figures for compromise but rather attacks, so it’s unclear how many organizations were materially impacted by them.</p> <p>“With major increases in encrypted threats, IoT malware, cryptojacking and new unknown variants, it’s critical that cybersecurity leaders have all the required tools and technology to proactively detect and remediate against increasingly sophisticated and targeted threats to their business,” argued Conner.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 New website aims to prevent heat deaths</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/weather/new-federal-website-aims-to-prevent-deaths-amid-heat-wave">https://www.q13fox.com/weather/new-federal-website-aims-to-prevent-deaths-amid-heat-wave</a>
GIST	<p><b>WASHINGTON (AP)</b> - The federal government <a href="#">hopes a new website</a> can help people and local governments beat the increasingly deadly heat of an <a href="#">ever-warming world</a>.</p> <p>Days after nearly half the country — 154.6 million people — sweated through <a href="#">a blistering heat wave</a>, which for the West, hasn’t <a href="#">quite finished</a>, the Biden Administration Tuesday unveiled <a href="#">heat.gov</a>, which includes maps, forecasts and health advice. The government can’t lower temperatures in the short-term, but it can shrink heat’s death toll, officials said.</p> <p>"July 2021 was the <a href="#">hottest month ever recorded</a> on Earth and summers are getting hotter and deadlier," said National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration chief Rick Spinrad. "The annual average temperature of the contiguous U.S. has already warmed over the past few decades and is projected to rise by 5 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit (2.8 to 5 degrees Celsius) by the end of this century."</p> <p>But officials said even though heat is the <a href="#">No. 1 weather killer</a>, and warming is worsening, deaths can still be prevented. That’s the purpose of the website.</p> <p>"We don’t have to accept" heat deaths, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said Tuesday. "This doesn’t have to be this way."</p> <p>The new website is aimed both at local planners to help them decide whether it is too hot for road work, at farmers for planting and harvesting advice, and even "a mom trying to decide this summer: Is it safe for your kids to play outside or to go to summer camp?" Raimondo said.</p> <p>Pat Breyse, director of environmental health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said the predictions the new website offers can help authorities plan for extreme heat in advance and protect people who are most at risk, by setting up cooling centers and providing water, for example.</p> <p>"There’s a host of things that we can do with this advance warning from the data that NOAA provides us, particularly from a health standpoint," Breyse said. He pointed to earlier efforts by Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont to change weather service heat warnings to make them more effective for New England residents.</p> <p>The new website could be put to use immediately because record-breaking temperatures are forecast for Spokane, Washington, and Boise, Idaho — heat in the low to mid 100s, Spinrad said.</p>

	<p>The website follows other Biden Administration <a href="#">action on heat</a>, including financial aid to help on air conditioning for low-income residents, grants to build new cooling centers, upcoming rules for workers outside in the heat and help for cities to cool urban heat islands with more tree cover. <a href="#">Calling climate change "an emergency,"</a> but stopping short of invoking emergency measures, President Biden last week promised more action to fight global warming.</p> <p>Outside experts said the multi-agency website and action are overdue.</p> <p>"This is an important step for elevating the risks of heat," said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd, past president of the American Meteorological Society. "For too long, heat has been one of the deadliest weather hazards, but has languished from an urgency standpoint," ignored by the public, media and decision-makers. Shepherd said people scamper inside at the threat of lightning or tornado, but exert themselves when the heat index is 100 or higher.</p> <p>North Carolina state climatologist Kathie Dello said, "extreme heat is one of our greatest challenges as a county and I'm glad to see the interagency cooperation."</p> <p>It's important that the website shows that heat isn't just a problem for today "but in the future," Dello said. Given warming trends, this summer with its widespread heat waves "is likely to be one of the coolest summers of the rest of our lives," Raimondo said. "That's a pretty scary thing."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Cyber priorities federal agencies in 2024</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://therecord.media/biden-administration-sets-cyber-priorities-for-fed-agencies-in-24/">https://therecord.media/biden-administration-sets-cyber-priorities-for-fed-agencies-in-24/</a>
GIST	<p>The Biden administration late last week issued guidance that laid out the cybersecurity funding priorities that federal agencies should adhere to for the upcoming fiscal year 2024 budget cycle.</p> <p><a href="#">The July 22 memorandum</a> — signed by Office of Management and Budget Director Sholanda Young and National Cyber Director Chris Inglis — is an effort to motivate organizations to move closer to the benchmarks set by a <a href="#">sweeping executive order</a> President Joe Biden signed in response to the SolarWinds espionage campaign, as well as other cyber-related strategies the White House has released.</p> <p>Civilian agencies “will make investments in three cyber investment priority areas: Improving the Defense and Resilience of Government Networks; Deepening Cross-Sector Collaboration in Defense of Critical Infrastructure; and Strengthening the Foundations of Our Digitally-Enabled Future,” according to the memo.</p> <p>For example, defending critical infrastructure against digital threats “will require an unprecedented level of collaboration between the public and private sectors. Agencies will build this collaboration in FY 2024 by prioritizing their sector risk management agency (SRMA) responsibilities and ensuring adequate information sharing through designated cybersecurity centers.”</p> <p>The priorities “should be addressed within the FY 2024 Budget guidance levels provided by OMB. OMB and the Office of the National Cyber Director (ONCD) will jointly review agency responses to these priorities, identify potential gaps, and potential solutions to those gaps,” the document states.</p> <p>They will then “provide feedback to agencies on whether the priorities are adequately addressed and consistent with the overall cybersecurity strategy and policy — aiding agencies’ multiyear planning through the regular budget process,” it adds.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Lockbit ramps up attacks on public sector</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/lockbit-ramps-up-attacks-on-public/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/lockbit-ramps-up-attacks-on-public/</a>

GIST	<p>The prolific Lockbit ransomware gang appears to have claimed another two scalps in recent days: the Canadian town of St Marys and the Italian tax agency.</p> <p>The local administration at St Marys explained in an update on Friday that the attack occurred last Wednesday, locking an internal server and encrypting data on it.</p> <p>“Upon learning of the incident, staff took immediate steps to secure any sensitive information, including locking down the town’s IT systems and restricting access to email. The town also notified its legal counsel, the Stratford Police Service and the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security,” <a href="#">a statement read</a>.</p> <p>“The town is now working with cyber incident response experts to investigate the source of the incident, restore its back up data and assess the impacts on its information, if any. These experts are also assisting staff as they work to fully unlock and decrypt the town’s systems, a process that could take days.”</p> <p>Critical local services, including fire, police, transit and water/wastewater systems were apparently unaffected by the incident, but it’s unclear if any sensitive data was stolen in the raid.</p> <p>That’s not the case in Italy, where an attack by affiliates using the Lockbit ransomware reportedly resulted in the theft of 78GB of data.</p> <p>Hackers targeted Italian revenue agency l'Agenzia delle Entrate, so that data could theoretically contain highly sensitive personal and financial information.</p> <p>According to the local <a href="#">ANSA news wire</a>, the revenue service has asked Italy’s Sogei IT agency to look into reports that the threat actors have given it five days to pay up or else risk the files being made public. Mike Varley, threat consultant at Adarma, argued that public sector organizations are often targeted because hackers believe they’re more likely to pay.</p> <p>"Organizations seeking to improve their overall ransomware resilience should be proactively asking themselves, ‘where are we most vulnerable to external threats?’ ‘what are we protecting?’ and ‘where are those assets housed?,’ he added.</p> <p>“Security teams need to be actively hunting out control gaps and closing them by either tweaking existing controls, through technology acquisition, undertaking additional monitoring or by doing all three.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Twitter investigates data breach claim</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theregister.com/2022/07/25/twitter_investigates_data_breach/">https://www.theregister.com/2022/07/25/twitter_investigates_data_breach/</a>
GIST	<p>Twitter is investigating claims that a near-seven-month-old vulnerability in its software has been exploited to obtain the phone numbers and email addresses of a reported 5.4 million users.</p> <p>A miscreant using the handle "devil" claims to have siphoned the details and is selling it all on a cyber-crime forum, according to RestorePrivacy, a digital privacy advocacy group that first <a href="#">reported</a> the security breach. It's said that the info belongs to celebrities, companies, ordinary netizens, and accounts with highly desirable usernames.</p> <p>"We are reviewing the latest data to verify the authenticity of the claims and ensure the security of the accounts in question," a Twitter spokesperson wrote in an email to <i>The Register</i>.</p> <p>The statement also noted the exploited bug was reported through Twitter's bug bounty program and fixed in January.</p> <p>"We received a report of this incident several months ago through our bug bounty program, immediately investigated thoroughly and fixed the vulnerability," the spokesperson said. "As always, we're committed to protecting the privacy and security of the people who use Twitter. We're grateful to the security</p>

community who engages in our bug bounty program to help us identify potential vulnerabilities such as this."

The Twitter spokesperson did not respond to *The Register's* questions about whether the owners of the accounts in question have been notified, and what the company is doing to mitigate the issue.

A HackerOne user, zhirinovskiy, [disclosed](#) the privacy flaw, which lies in the authorization process in Twitter's Android client, on New Year's Day. Essentially, an oversight in the software's design could be abused to harvest the email addresses and phone numbers registered with Twitter accounts, even if users had chosen not to reveal this info.

"This is a serious threat, as people can not only find users who have restricted the ability to be found by email/phone number, but any attacker with a basic knowledge of scripting/coding can enumerate a big chunk of the Twitter user base unavailable to enumeration prior (create a database with phone/email to username connections)," zhirinovskiy wrote at the time.

"Such bases can be sold to malicious parties for advertising purposes, or for the purposes of [targeting] celebrities in different malicious activities," the bug hunter added. "Also a cool feature that I [discovered] is that you can even find the id's of suspended Twitter accounts using this method."

Twitter paid zhirinovskiy a \$5,040 bounty for the discovery, and fixed the vulnerability on January 13.

Last week, however, RestorePrivacy said it found the Twitter database for sale on Breached Forums, analyzed the the samples, and confirmed that they matched "real-world people that can be easily verified with public profiles on Twitter."

The organization also reached out to Devil, the seller, who wanted \$30,000 for the information and blamed "Twitter's incompetence" for the leak.

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HEADLINE	07/26 Europol: helped 1.5M decrypt ransom files
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3pv9v/european-cops-helped-15-million-people-decrypt-their-ransomwared-computers">https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3pv9v/european-cops-helped-15-million-people-decrypt-their-ransomwared-computers</a>
GIST	<p>In the last six years, European cops estimate that they have helped around 1.5 million people and organizations decrypt files that were locked by hackers with ransomware, saving around \$1.5 billion.</p> <p>Europol, the European Union law enforcement agency, announced the figures on Tuesday, a day that marks the sixth anniversary of the <a href="#">No More Ransom</a> project, which brings law enforcement and private industry partners together with the goal of providing decryption tools and other support for ransomware victims.</p> <p>The initiative was born when a Dutch telecom called the local police to alert it that its employees had found a command and control server inside its infrastructure used by a ransomware group, according to Marijn Schuurbiens, the head of operations at Europol's European Cybercrime Centre, who worked at the Dutch police at the time.</p> <p>When Schuurbiens and his colleagues seized the server, and when they started investigating the case, they realized the server contained the decryption keys that would unlock the files that the hackers had encrypted, Schuurbiens said in a press briefing on Monday.</p> <p>"With these keys, we could immediately help victims of this ransomware scam. So I saw this opportunity," Schuurbiens explained. "What if we could offer these decryption keys for free to the victims through a website?"</p>



And that's what the No More Ransom project has been doing for the last six years. As of today, the group offers 136 free decryption tools for 165 ransomware variants, including Gandcrab, REvil, and Maze, according to Europol.

Industry experts have praised the partnership between a government agency, the private sector, and victims.

"I think No More Ransom provides a valuable service and would love to see it expand its role," Allan Liska, a researcher who specializes at tracking ransomware at cybersecurity firm Recorded Future, told Motherboard in an email. "I would also like to see what the breakdown by year of that \$1.5 Billion is, I am guessing it looks a lot like a hockey stick graph."

"Too many organizations are afraid to reach out to law enforcement when they have been hit by ransomware, often out of a misplaced fear that law enforcement is going to make it worse," Liska added. "But, there are many things that law enforcement does, through channels such as No More Ransom, to help victims."

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 'No More Ransom' offers free rescue tools</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/hit-ransomware-no-more-ransom-now-offers-136-free-tools-to-rescue-your-files">https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/hit-ransomware-no-more-ransom-now-offers-136-free-tools-to-rescue-your-files</a>
GIST	<p>Ransomware attacks have been growing in number and severity for years, with headlines focused on ransom demands that have climbed to amounts once unthinkable. While the data is alarming, it does not mean that you are helpless against the high-tech extortionists orchestrating these attacks. <a href="#">The No More Ransom initiative</a> offers over a hundred free decryption tools to rescue your hostage files.</p> <p><b>Six years of public-private partnership</b> Celebrating its <a href="#">sixth anniversary</a> today, No More Ransom provides keys to unlocking encrypted files as well as information on how to avoid getting infected in the first place.</p> <p>Launched by Europol, the Dutch National Police (Politie) and IT security companies, the No More Ransom portal initially offered four tools for unlocking different types of ransomware and was available only in English.</p> <p>Six years later, No More Ransom offers 136 free tools for 165 ransomware variants, including Gandcrab, REvil/Sodinokibi, Maze/Egregor/Sekhmet and more. Over 188 partners from the public and private sector have joined the scheme, regularly providing new decryption tools for the latest strains of malicious software.</p> <p>To date, the scheme has so far helped over 1.5 million people successfully decrypt their devices without needing to pay the criminals. The portal is available in 37 languages in order to better assist victims of ransomware across the globe.</p> <p><b>No better cure than prevention</b> The best cure against ransomware remains <a href="#">diligent prevention</a>. You are strongly advised to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regularly back up data stored on your electronic devices.</li><li>• Watch your clicks – do you know where a link will take you?</li><li>• Do not open attachments in e-mails from unknown senders, even if they look important and credible.</li><li>• Ensure that your security software and operating system are up to date.</li><li>• Use two-factor authentication (2FA) to protect your user accounts.</li><li>• Limit the possibility to export large amounts of corporate data to external file exchange portals.</li><li>• If you become a victim, do not pay! <a href="#">Report the crime</a> and check <a href="#">No More Ransom</a> for decryption tools.</li></ul>

### Join the fight against ransomware

Are you a cybersecurity company willing to join forces with law enforcement and industry leaders in the fight to disrupt ransomware?

Do you have an innovative solution for ransomware families not covered yet in the portal to help victims recover their files without giving into the demands of the criminals?

Then we want to hear from you!

Find more information and prevention tips on [www.nomoreransom.org](http://www.nomoreransom.org)

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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	<b>07/27 Al-Shabab claims Somalia towns bombings</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/explosions-two-somalia-towns-kill-least-5-police-residents-2022-07-27/">https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/explosions-two-somalia-towns-kill-least-5-police-residents-2022-07-27/</a>
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, July 27 (Reuters) - Separate explosions in two southern Somalia towns killed at least five people on Wednesday, including a local administrator, state radio, police and residents said.</p> <p>The al Qaeda-linked al Shabaab militant group said it carried out both attacks.</p> <p>In the first incident, two bombs planted in a livestock market in Afgoye town in Lower Shabelle region killed at least four people, police and residents said.</p> <p>"One bomb exploded but caused no casualty, then a second bomb exploded, killing four civilians," Police Captain Nur Farah told Reuters from Afgoye.</p> <p>The second explosion in the port town of Marka killed its district commissioner, state-run radio said.</p> <p>"The District Commissioner of Marka, the provincial Capital of Lower Shabelle, Abdullahi Ali Wafow was killed in terrorist explosion in the town," Radio Muqdisho said in a tweet, citing local security officials.</p> <p>Ahmed Farah, a Marka resident, said security personnel had sealed off the scene of the blast.</p> <p>Al Shabaab military spokesman Abdiasis Abu Musab said the Islamist group was behind both attacks.</p> <p>"We killed in an attack the Marka district commissioner and those with him. In Afgoye we killed two soldiers in an explosion," Musab told Reuters.</p> <p>Al Shabaab has been fighting for more than 10 years to dislodge the country's central government and establish rule based on its strict interpretation of Islam's sharia law.</p> <p>The group frequently carries out gun assaults and bombings of both military and civilian targets in Somalia and has also carried out attacks on regional targets, especially in neighbouring Kenya.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Court: Benghazi attacker sentence too 'low'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-wa/2022/07/26/khattala-benghazi-sentence-terrorism/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-wa/2022/07/26/khattala-benghazi-sentence-terrorism/</a>
GIST	<p>A Libyan militia leader involved in the deadly 2012 attack on a U.S. compound in Libya was given an "unreasonably low" sentence, and his case must be sent back to a lower court for a new punishment, a federal appeals court ruled Tuesday.</p>

Ahmed Abu Khattala was [found guilty in a 2017 trial in D.C. federal court](#) of engaging in terrorism, joining the Benghazi assault armed with a semiautomatic weapon and putting lives in danger through destruction of U.S. property. But jurors [were not convinced](#) he had any involvement in the murder of Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and the three other Americans who died in the attack. He was acquitted on all but four out of 24 charges.

Khattala appealed his convictions, saying the evidence was flawed, the verdict inconsistent and the prosecutor's closing argument prejudicial. The panel of appellate judges [dismissed those claims](#), instead finding that Khattala — referred to in court filings as Khatallah — was rightly found guilty and that his 22-year prison sentence was “shockingly low and unsupportable.”

The fact that Khattala, 51, was acquitted of the most serious charges against him did not merit such a departure from federal guidelines recommending 30 years to life, the unanimous three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit said.

“Those contemplating attacks on the United States, its official properties, and (most importantly) its personnel must know they will face severe consequences if apprehended and convicted,” the court wrote. “Their leaders even more so.”

Khattala, who was [captured by U.S. Special Forces in 2014](#), was the first person convicted in the attacks. A close ally, [Mustafa al-Imam](#), was subsequently convicted of similar charges and sentenced to 19½ years in prison.

The court agreed with Khattala that an assistant U.S. attorney gave a closing argument that was “plainly improper and unbefitting a federal prosecutor” by personalizing the crime as “attacking us” and “ours” while denigrating agreed-upon descriptions of classified evidence as unreliable “words on a piece of paper.” The government called the remarks “a small fraction of a lengthy trial,” without arguing their propriety.

“We expect better from an attorney representing the United States,” the appellate court said. But the judges said that the “misconduct” did not merit a new trial given that “on the charges for which he was convicted, the case against Khatallah was not close.”

Khattala was filmed entering a building on the U.S. compound, armed with an AK-47 rifle just before midnight on Sept. 11, 2021 — about two hours after the initial assault and half an hour before militants gained entry to the adjacent CIA facility. When he exited, he was seen gesturing for others to follow him. Armed men linked to Khattala and his militia were seen pouring gasoline, setting fires and entering buildings on the mission grounds. Phone records show he was in touch with some of them before, during and after the attack. He admitted to the FBI that he was on the scene after the breach.

When he sentenced Khattala in 2018, Judge Christopher R. Cooper said he was “somewhat reluctantly” concluding that the militant was found guilty of “essentially a property crime.” Jurors, he said, had rejected evidence that Khattala was involved in either the fire at the mission's main residential facility, where Stevens and State Department Foreign Service officer Sean Smith died of smoke inhalation, or the later attack on an adjacent CIA facility where security officers Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty were killed by mortar fire.

Three Libyan witnesses testified that Khattala's role was more extensive, including stockpiling weapons, mortar rounds and a shoulder-launched missile, and seeking armored vehicles in advance of an attack he intended to result in American deaths. But a juror said in [an interview with The Washington Post](#) after the trial that this testimony was undermined by the cooperators' antipathy toward Khattala and millions in payment from the United States for their help.

To consider conduct on which Khattala was acquitted, Cooper found, would tell the jurors “that I really didn't mean what I told them about the importance and the sanctity of jury service.”

	The appeals court said that while Cooper “retains the discretion to vary upward or downward” from sentencing guidelines, including “to discount acquitted conduct,” the judge “abused [his] discretion” by “imposing a sentence both lower than the minimum that would be appropriate in light of the jury’s acquittals and far lower than could be justified on this record.”
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Taliban crackdown ‘suffocating’ women</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/amnesty-taliban-crackdown-rights-suffocating-women-87474251">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/amnesty-taliban-crackdown-rights-suffocating-women-87474251</a>
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD -- The lives of Afghan women and girls are being destroyed by a “suffocating” crackdown by the Taliban since they took power nearly a year ago, Amnesty International said in a report released Wednesday.</p> <p>After they captured the capital, Kabul, in August 2021 and ousted the internationally backed government, the Taliban presented themselves as having moderated since their first time in power, in the 1990s. Initially, Taliban officials spoke of allowing women to continue to work and girls to continue their education.</p> <p>Instead, they formed an all-male government stacked with veterans of their hard-line rule that has banned girls from attending school from seventh grade, imposed all-covering dress that leaves only the eyes visible and restricted women's access to work.</p> <p>Amnesty said the Taliban have also decimated protections for those facing domestic violence, detained women and girls for minor violations and contributed to a surge in child marriages. The report also documented the torture and abuse of women arrested by the Taliban for protesting against restrictions.</p> <p>“Taken together, these policies form a system of repression that discriminates against women and girls in almost every aspect of their lives,” the report said. “This suffocating crackdown against Afghanistan’s female population is increasing day by day.”</p> <p>The group's researchers visited Afghanistan in March as part of a nine-month-long investigation conducted from September 2021 to June 2022. They interviewed 90 women and 11 girls, between 14 and 74 years-old, across Afghanistan.</p> <p>Among them were women detained for protesting who described torture at the hands of Taliban guards, including beatings and threats of death.</p> <p>One woman told Amnesty that guards beat her and other women on the breasts and between the legs, “so that we couldn’t show the world.” She said one told her, “I can kill you right now, and no one would say anything.”</p> <p>A university student who was detained said she was electrically shocked on her shoulder, face, neck and elsewhere, while the Taliban shouted insults at her. One held a gun at her and told her, “I will kill you, and no one will be able to find your body.”</p> <p>The report said rates of child, early and forced marriage in Afghanistan are surging under Taliban rule.</p> <p>The increase, Amnesty said, is fueled by Afghanistan’s economic and humanitarian crisis and the lack of education and job prospects for women and girls. The report documented cases of forced marriages of women and girls to Taliban members — under pressure by the Taliban member or by the women’s families.</p> <p>One woman from a central province of Afghanistan told Amnesty that she was compelled her to marry off her 13-year-old daughter to a 30-year-old neighbor in exchange for 60,000 Afghanis (around US\$670). She said she felt relieved because her daughter “won’t be hungry anymore.”</p>

She said she was also considering the same for her 10-year-old daughter but was holding off in hopes the girl could get an education and eventually secure a job to support the family. “Of course, if they don’t open the school, I will have to marry her off,” she added.

“You have a patriarchal government, war, poverty, drought, girls out of school. With all of these factors combined ... we knew child marriage was going to go through the roof,” said Stephanie Sinclair, director of Too Young to Wed, who was quoted in the report.

The Taliban seized Kabul as U.S. and NATO forces were withdrawing from Afghanistan, ending a nearly 20-year war against the Taliban’s insurgency. The world has refused to recognize the Taliban’s rule, demanding it respect human rights and show tolerance for other groups. The U.S. and its allies have cut off billions in development funds that kept the government afloat, as well as froze billions in Afghan national assets.

This sent the already shattered economy into freefall, increasing poverty dramatically and creating one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. Millions, struggling to feed their families, are kept alive by a massive U.N.-led relief effort.

Amnesty called on the international community to take action to protect Afghan women and girls.

“Less than one year after the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan, their draconian policies are depriving millions of women and girls of their right to lead safe, free and fulfilling lives,” said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty secretary general.

“If the international community fails to act, it will be abandoning women and girls in Afghanistan, and undermining human rights everywhere,” she said.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 US, Taliban gaps remain Afghan reserves</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/exclusive-us-taliban-make-progress-afghan-reserves-big-gaps-remain-2022-07-26/">https://www.reuters.com/world/exclusive-us-taliban-make-progress-afghan-reserves-big-gaps-remain-2022-07-26/</a>
GIST	<p>KABUL/WASHINGTON, July 26 (Reuters) - U.S. and Taliban officials have exchanged proposals for the release of billions of dollars from Afghan central bank reserves held abroad into a trust fund, three sources familiar with the talks said, offering a hint of progress in efforts to ease Afghanistan's economic crisis.</p> <p>Significant differences between the sides remain, however, according to two of the sources, including the Taliban's refusal to replace the bank's top political appointees, one of whom is under U.S. sanctions as are several of the movement's leaders.</p> <p>Some experts said such a move would help restore confidence in the institution by insulating it from interference by the Islamist militant group that seized power a year ago but which foreign governments do not recognise.</p> <p>Freeing up cash may not solve all of Afghanistan's financial troubles, but it would provide relief for a country hit by a slump in foreign aid, persistent drought and an earthquake in June that killed 1,000 people. Millions of Afghans are facing a second winter without enough to eat.</p> <p>While the Taliban do not reject the concept of a trust fund, they oppose a U.S. proposal for third-party control of the fund that would hold and disburse returned reserves, said a Taliban government source who spoke on condition of anonymity.</p> <p>The United States has been in talks with Switzerland and other parties on the creation of a mechanism that would include the trust fund, disbursements from which would be decided with the help of an international board, according to a U.S. source who also declined to be named in order to discuss the matter.</p>

A possible model could be the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, a World Bank-administered fund created to get donations of foreign development assistance to Kabul, the U.S. source added.

"No agreement has been reached yet," said Shah Mehrabi, an Afghan-American economics professor who is on the Afghan central bank's supreme council.

The U.S. State Department and Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs declined to comment. The Afghan central bank did not respond to requests for comment.

#### SIGNIFICANT PORTION

U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West, speaking at an Afghanistan-focused conference in Uzbekistan on Tuesday, welcomed the dialogue.

"We have made it clear that a future recapitalisation of the (Afghanistan) central bank and the Afghan financial system is possible provided that reasonable and serious steps are taken to professionalise the central bank, to enhance its AML/CFT (anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing) architecture and its independence," he said.

Some \$9 billion in reserves have been held outside Afghanistan, including \$7 billion in the United States, since the Taliban overran Kabul last August as U.S.-led forces withdrew after 20 years of fighting the militants.

Foreign governments and rights groups have accused the Taliban of abuses including extrajudicial killings during and after the insurgency, and the movement has curtailed women's freedoms since regaining power.

The international community wants the group to improve its record on women's and other rights before officially recognising it.

The Taliban have promised to investigate alleged killings and say they are working to secure Afghans' rights to education and free speech within the parameters of Islamic law.

#### 'POSITIVE MOVE'

At talks in Doha last month, the Taliban submitted to U.S. officials their response to the U.S. proposal for a mechanism to free up Afghan assets, said Mehrabi, the Taliban official and a senior diplomat.

Experts cautioned that releasing funds would bring only temporary relief and new revenue streams were needed to replace direct foreign aid that financed 70 percent of the government budget before it was halted after the Taliban takeover.

But the exchange of proposals was seen by some as a glimmer of hope that a system can be created that allows for the release of Afghan central bank funds while ensuring they are not accessed by the Taliban.

Negotiations on the assets and other issues faltered after Washington cancelled meetings in Doha in March when the Taliban reneged on their promise to open girls' high schools.

"It is a positive move overall," that the Taliban did not reject the U.S. proposal, said Mehrabi, who added that he had not seen the Taliban counter-offer.

The Taliban official said the group was open to allowing a State Department-appointed contractor to monitor Afghanistan's central bank compliance with anti-money laundering standards, and that monitoring experts would be able to go to Afghanistan.

But the Taliban were concerned the U.S. idea could create a parallel central banking structure, the official added, and were not prepared to remove top political appointees including deputy governor Noor Ahmad Agha, who is under U.S. terrorism sanctions.



The U.S. source denied the proposed trust fund would amount to a parallel central bank.

#### INITIAL TRANCHE

Negotiations have focused on an initial release of \$3.5 billion that U.S. President Joe Biden ordered set aside "for the benefit of the Afghan people" out of \$7 billion in Afghan reserves held by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

The other \$3.5 billion is being contested in lawsuits against the Taliban stemming from the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, but courts could decide to release those funds too.

West in February said funds set aside by Biden potentially could be used to recapitalize a reformed central bank and the paralyzed banking system.

Afghanistan's economy went into freefall after the Taliban takeover, with the central bank's foreign-held reserves frozen, Washington and other donors halting aid and the United States ending deliveries of hard currency.

The banking sector all but collapsed and the national currency, the Afghani, plummeted.

The World Bank says it has strengthened, although shortages of dollars and Afghanis persist. High unemployment and soaring prices, fuelled by drought, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, worsened the humanitarian crisis.

Experts said releasing foreign-held funds to the central bank would help it stem the crisis.

"You need a central bank regulating the value of the currency, regulating prices, ensuring liquidity for imports," said Graeme Smith, a senior consultant for the International Crisis Group. "This is not optional (or) people won't eat."

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Terror plan: more prison attacks in Nigeria</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/544719-exclusive-terrorists-plotting-more-prison-attacks-in-three-states-military-intel.html">https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/544719-exclusive-terrorists-plotting-more-prison-attacks-in-three-states-military-intel.html</a>
GIST	<p>Terrorists are planning more prison attacks targeting facilities in Gusau, Birnin Kebbi, and Katsina to free their imprisoned fighters, military intelligence sources have said, a warning already passed to the <a href="#">Nigerian Correctional Service</a> (NCS).</p> <p>The attacks are planned to be carried out successively, first, in Gusau, then Birnin Kebbi, and finally Katsina, the military told the correctional service, according to officials familiar with the transmission of the intelligence and documents sighted by PREMIUM TIMES.</p> <p>The phased plan, sources said, is because the terrorists are unable to mobilise sufficient logistical capabilities to strike simultaneously in three states.</p> <p>All the target facilities are in Nigeria's North-west facing aggravated violence by terrorists, often called bandits, and other violent extremist groups like Boko Haram, Ansaru, and ISWAP, who have expanded into the region in the past years from the North-east.</p> <p>A rare collaboration of ISWAP and Ansaru, two Boko Haram splinter groups, produced the audacious July 6 Kuje prison attack in the federal capital, Abuja, researchers and negotiators with an understanding of the working of the terrorists said. The attack showed the terrorists' capacity to exploit Nigeria's worsening vulnerability under President Muhammadu Buhari.</p> <p>In a new video depicting the torture of kidnapped victims of the <a href="#">Abuja-Kaduna train attack, believed to be a terrorist act, one of the armed men claimed</a> to be a Kuje prison escapee. The terrorists have</p>

repeatedly said the government knows what they want to free the captives. Intelligence sources say they are seeking the release of their jailed members in exchange for the freedom of the train attack victims. In its latest warning, the military said the terror attack “may be staged” on a Friday, explicitly indicating this Friday, 29 July, for the first in Gusau, Zamfara State.

Describing the logic behind striking on a Friday, military intelligence sources said that is when the terrorists believe senior prison officials would have travelled for the weekend or stayed off duty at their various homes. In addition, at such time, the terrorists perceive that it could be easier to compromise warders to smuggle logistical coordination items, like telephones, into the prisons.

A source, who has worked with the government on counter-insurgency and helped obtain intelligence from the communications of imprisoned terrorists, said the information flow between terrorists in and out of prisons depends on telephone communications facilitated by compromised warders.

To circumvent counter-intelligence, the source said after each communication, the SIM card used is destroyed or thrown away and another is procured for them by compromised warders next time. In one case, the source said, several trashed SIM cards were recovered in the grasses behind the Kuje prison facility after an inmate was tortured to confess how the communication occurred.

### **Hibernating in neighbourhoods**

The military said the terrorists’ plans include the relocation of the required fighters and arms to areas hosting or close to the target prisons.

In the case of Gusau, which the military specifically said the terrorists plan to attack this Friday, fighters would move to the Ungwan Gwaza neighbourhood, which hosts the Gusau prison. They would hibernate there “with relations” till the time the attack is to be carried out.

Similarly, the military said the Kofar Soro area of Katsina would host terrorists ahead of the planned Katsina prison attack “within the month of August”. The prison is located at Kofar Soro, which also hosts the emir’s palace, a police station, and a big mosque, Google Earth shows.

For Birnin Kebbi, the terrorists plan to attack with some fighters relocated to an area called Kwaido in Augie LGA of Kebbi State. Analysis of Google Maps suggests this area is more than two hours away from the capital Birnin Kebbi.

The military further warned that the terrorists might be staying with their relatives within the quarters of the correctional service’s staff.

### **“Beef up”**

In view of the uncovered planned attacks, the military has asked the correctional service to “beef up” security measures around the affected facilities, PREMIUM TIMES has been told. Specifically, the military requested heightened vigilance and increased collaboration with security agencies to forestall the “subversive acts” of the terrorists.

The spokesperson for the correctional service, Abubakar Umar, said he would not make specific comments on the warning from the military intelligence, which PREMIUM TIMES understands was transmitted at the end of the past week. But Mr Umar said following the Kuje attack, the service has deployed more officials, including armed squads to facilities.

“Our intelligence system has been raised and we are working with other security agencies to ensure our facilities are protected nationwide against further attacks,” Mr Umar said.

Military spokesperson Jimmy Akpor, a major general, did not comment for this story after a message describing our findings was sent to him. He also did not answer telephone calls.

	Since 2017, Nigeria has suffered at least 12 prison breaks and attacks with more than a thousand inmates including dangerous criminals released into society. There were also more than 15 failed attempts, officials told PREMIUM TIMES.
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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	07/26 Glaciers vanishing record rate in Alps
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/exclusive-glaciers-vanishing-record-rate-alps-following-heatwaves-2022-07-26/">https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/exclusive-glaciers-vanishing-record-rate-alps-following-heatwaves-2022-07-26/</a>
GIST	<p>MORTERATSCH GLACIER, Switzerland, July 26 (Reuters) - From the way 45-year-old Swiss glaciologist Andreas Linsbauer bounds over icy crevasses, you would never guess he was carrying 10 kg of steel equipment needed to chart the decline of Switzerland's glaciers.</p> <p>Normally, he heads down this path on the massive Morteratsch Glacier in late September, the end of the summer melt season in the Alps. But exceptionally high ice loss this year has brought him to this 15-square-kilometer (5.8-square-mile) amphitheatre of ice two months early for emergency maintenance work.</p> <p>The measuring poles he uses to track changes in the depth of the pack are at risk of dislodging entirely as the ice melts away and he needs to drill new holes. (<a href="https://tmsnr.rs/3RXrTb7">https://tmsnr.rs/3RXrTb7</a>)</p> <p>The Alps' glaciers are on track for their highest mass losses in at least 60 years of record keeping, data shared exclusively with Reuters shows. By looking at the difference in how much snow fell in winter, and how much ice melts in the summer, scientists can measure how much a glacier has shrunk in any given year.</p> <p>Since last winter, which brought relatively little snowfall, the Alps have sweltered through two big early summer heatwaves – including one in July marked by temperatures near 30 Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) in the Swiss mountain village of Zermatt.</p> <p>During this heatwave, the elevation at which water froze was measured at a record high of 5,184 meters (17,000 feet) – at an altitude higher than Mont Blanc's -- compared with the normal summer level of between 3,000-3,500 meters (9,800-11,500 feet).</p> <p>"It's really obvious that this is an extreme season," Linsbauer said, shouting over the roar of rushing meltwater as he checked the height of a pole jutting out of the ice.</p> <p><b>MOUNTAIN MELTDOWN</b></p> <p>Most of the world's mountain glaciers — remnants of the last ice age — are retreating due to climate change. But those in the European Alps are especially vulnerable because they are smaller with relatively little ice cover. Meanwhile, temperatures in the Alps are warming at around 0.3C per decade — around twice as fast as the global average.</p> <p>If greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, the Alps glaciers are expected to lose more than 80% of their current mass by 2100. Many will disappear regardless of whatever emissions action is taken now, thanks to global warming baked in by past emissions, according to a 2019 report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.</p> <p>Already, Morteratsch is much changed from the glacier depicted on the region's tourist maps. The long tongue that once reached deep into the valley below has shrunk back by nearly 3 kilometers (2 miles), while the depth of the snow and ice pack has thinned by up to 200 meters (656 feet). A parallel glacier Pers flowed into it until 2017 but has now receded so much that an expanding strip of grit lies between them.</p>

The dire situation this year raises concern that the Alps' glaciers might vanish sooner than expected. With more years like 2022, that could happen, said Matthias Huss, who leads Glacier Monitoring Switzerland (GLAMOS).

"We are seeing model results expected a few decades in the future are happening now," Huss said. "I did not expect to see such an extreme year so early in the century."

#### NO SNOW, HIGH HEAT

Reuters spoke with glaciologists in Austria, France, and Italy who confirmed that glaciers there were on track for record losses. In Austria, "the glaciers are snow-free up to the summits," said Andrea Fischer, a glaciologist at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Seasonal snowfall, apart from replenishing ice lost during summer, protects glaciers from further melt by providing a white cover that reflects sunlight back out to atmosphere better than darker ice – sullied by dust or pollution – can do.

But at the Grand Etret glacier in northwest Italy, only 1.3 metres (4.2 feet) of snow had accumulated during this past winter – 2 metres (6.6 feet) less than the annual average for the 20 years up to 2020.

This year's Alpine ice losses, registered even before the biggest melt month of August, surprised scientists to some extent, as many of the glaciers had already lost their lower-lying snouts. Because they had retreated up the mountain, where temperatures are cooler, scientists thought they should have been better protected.

"You can easily imagine the final results after summer will be ... extensive loss of glacier coverage in the Italian Alps," said Marco Giardino, vice president of the Italian Glaciological Committee.

Data shared exclusively with Reuters shows that Morteratsch is now shedding about 5 centimeters (2 inches) a day and is already in a worse state than it would normally be at the end of an average summer, according to data from GLAMOS and the Universite libre de Bruxelles.

The nearby Silvretta Glacier has lost about 1 meter (3.3 feet) more than at the same point in 1947 – the worst year in its database stretching back to 1915.

#### HIMALAYAN THAW

Himalayan glaciers are also on track for a record ice loss year, scientists told Reuters. When the summer monsoon season arrived in the Kashmir region, for example, many glaciers had already been shrunk drastically, with their snowlines starting high up the mountain, after a March-May heatwave marked by temperatures above 48C (118F) in northern India.

An early June expedition in India's Himachal Pradesh found that the Chhota Shigri Glacier had lost much of its snow cover. "The highest temperature in over a century in March through May clearly had its impacts," said glaciologist Mohd Farooq Azam at the Indian Institute of Technology Indore.

#### LOSING 'NATIONAL HERITAGE'

Vanishing glaciers are already endangering lives and livelihoods. Earlier this month, a glacier collapse on the Marmolada in Italy killed 11 people. read more Days later, a collapsing glacier in the Tian Shan mountains of eastern Kyrgyzstan triggered a massive avalanche, sending ice and rocks hurtling toward passing tourists.

Above the Swiss village of Saas Fee, a path leading to a mountain hut once passed through a summer snowfield on top of the Chessjen Glacier.

	<p>"It's too dangerous now," due to the risk of falling rocks, once held together by hard-frozen ice, said hutkeeper Dario Andenmatten while gazing out over a barren landscape dotted with glacial lakes. Nearby, the rumble of stones tumbling from the mountain could be heard.</p> <p>Swiss residents worry that the glacier losses will hurt their economy. Some area ski resorts of the Alps, which rely on these glaciers, now cover them with white sheets to reflect sunlight and reduce melting.</p> <p>Swiss glaciers feature in many of the country's fairy tales, and the Aletsch Glacier is considered a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Losing the glaciers "means losing our national heritage, our identity," said hiker Bernardin Chavaillaz. "It's sad."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Skittles unfit for human consumption?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/well/eat/skittles-lawsuit-titanium-dioxide.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/well/eat/skittles-lawsuit-titanium-dioxide.html</a>
GIST	<p>If you've been paying attention to nutrition headlines lately, you may have noticed a recent lawsuit that claimed that Skittles — the colorful candies of “taste the rainbow” fame — were “unfit for human consumption” because of the presence of a “known toxin” called titanium dioxide.</p> <p>The class-action lawsuit, filed July 14 in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, said that Mars Inc., the maker of the candies, had “long known of the health problems” the chemical compound posed, and that it had even <a href="#">publicly committed in 2016</a> to phase the substance out of its products. Yet, according to the complaint, the candy company “flouted its own promise to consumers” and continued to sell Skittles with titanium dioxide, posing a “significant health risk to unsuspecting consumers.”</p> <p>But what is titanium dioxide, exactly? And should you be concerned about it in your candy — or in any other food, for that matter? Here's what we know.</p> <p><b>What is titanium dioxide?</b></p> <p>Titanium dioxide is a chemical compound, derived from a naturally occurring mineral, that is processed and used as a color additive, anti-caking agent and whitener, among other things, in thousands of food products across a range of categories. These include many chewing gums, baked goods, sandwich spreads, salad dressings and dairy products like cottage cheese, ice cream and coffee creamers, said Tasha Stoiber, a senior scientist at the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit focused on consumer health and safety. Sweet treats and candies also make up a large share of food products that contain the substance.</p> <p>One <a href="#">recent E.W.G. review</a> concluded that “thousands of children's sweets,” including Starburst and other candies marketed to kids, contained it.</p> <p>Titanium dioxide is also used in a variety of nonfood items, such as certain medications, sunscreens, cosmetics, paints and plastics.</p> <p><b>Is it safe to eat?</b></p> <p>It depends on whom you ask. Since 1966, the Food and Drug Administration has recognized the use <a href="#">of titanium dioxide in human food</a> as safe, so long as it doesn't exceed 1 percent of the food's weight.</p> <p>But despite its widespread use, studies published since the 1960s have raised questions about its safety. A 2015 <a href="#">review of mostly animal (but some human) studies</a>, for instance, found that titanium dioxide did not just pass through the body, as research in the 1960s suggested. Instead, the researchers found, the additive could be absorbed into the bloodstream via the intestines and accumulate in certain organs, potentially damaging the spleen, liver and kidneys.</p> <p>A <a href="#">subsequent animal study published in 2017</a> linked titanium dioxide with an increased risk of intestinal inflammation, cancer and damage to the immune system. This research was concerning enough that in 2019, the French government <a href="#">called for a ban of titanium dioxide by 2020</a>.</p>

And in [2021, another review of animal and human studies](#) raised the possibility that titanium dioxide could play a role in inflammatory bowel diseases and colorectal cancer.

This year, after an [assessment of the scientific literature](#) by the European Food Safety Authority, the European Union decided to [ban titanium dioxide in food](#). The agency [highlighted its concern](#) that the additive [could damage DNA](#) and lead to cancer. While more research is still needed, the agency concluded that it could not establish a safe level of titanium dioxide in food.

[Britain](#) and [Canada](#), however, disagreed with the European Union's decision and continued to allow titanium dioxide in food.

Norbert Kaminski is a professor of pharmacology and toxicology and the director of the Center for Research on Ingredient Safety at Michigan State University whose own animal [research on titanium dioxide](#) has been partially funded by industry groups such as the Titanium Dioxide Manufacturers Association and the International Association of Color Manufacturers. He said that the studies used to justify banning the ingredient in the European Union contained methodology flaws. He added that a [1979 study](#) by the National Toxicology Program, part of the National Institutes of Health, found no link between titanium dioxide and cancer. In that research, mice and rats were given the chemical compound in extremely large doses — amounting to 2.5 to 5 percent of their diet — across two years.

In response to a request for comment, an F.D.A. official said that the agency has reviewed the findings of the European Union's ban and concluded that the available studies “do not demonstrate safety concerns connected to the use of titanium dioxide as a color additive.”

But Pierre Herckes, a professor of chemistry at the School of Molecular Sciences at Arizona State University who [was an author of a 2014 study](#) on titanium dioxide, said that based on the current research, which is mixed, it's tricky to say whether consumers should limit their consumption of the additive. “I don't have a clear yes or no,” he said.

Dr. Herckes did say, however, that given that sweet treats and candies contain some of the highest levels of titanium dioxide and are mostly consumed by children, there is reason for concern, given their smaller bodies and higher relative doses. “If there is damage to the DNA, classical carcinogenicity, that is cumulative over time. When you are exposed to that in the younger years, it can hit you in later years,” he said.

#### **What can I do if I want to avoid it?**

While Mars Inc. is in the process of phasing out titanium dioxide in its products sold in Europe, the company has yet to take action in the United States, where titanium dioxide is still permitted.

In an emailed statement to The Times, Justin Comes, vice president of research and development at Mars Wrigley North America, said that the company's use of titanium dioxide “is in full compliance with government regulations. While we do not comment on pending litigation, all Mars Wrigley ingredients are safe and manufactured in compliance with strict quality and safety requirements established by food safety regulators, including the F.D.A.”

Mars Inc. did not respond when asked if it planned to remove the additive from its products sold in the United States.

Jaydee Hanson, policy director for the nonprofit Center for Food Safety, said that he was baffled as to why the company wasn't removing titanium dioxide from the U.S. market. “Maybe because the F.D.A. has not told them they're going to ban it,” he said.

Scott Faber, senior vice president of government affairs at the Environmental Working Group, said that steering clear of the additive could be difficult, since food companies aren't required to include it on their



ingredient lists, and not all companies do. The chemical compound may be especially hard to avoid in processed foods that might simply state “color added” rather than list the specific ingredients used.

Your best bet, then, for limiting your consumption of titanium dioxide is to choose products that don’t contain added coloring. Or you could stick to eating unprocessed, whole or organic foods when you can, said Marion Nestle, a professor emeritus of nutrition, food studies and public health at New York University.

Dr. Nestle noted that food additives like titanium dioxide were generally used to make “junk food look healthy and taste better.” She added that “those are not foods that a nutritionist would be likely to recommend except in very small quantities.”

The larger issue, though, Dr. Nestle said, is that the F.D.A. does not have the staff or the funds to do the necessary scientific review of this additive or countless others that are in our food supply.

The agency has long needed to review the thousands of food additives that it deemed safe decades ago, based on research that was [typically provided by the industry](#) or based on no research at all, Mr. Faber added.

“Titanium dioxide is really the poster child for many chemicals that were reviewed, in some cases, more than 50 years ago for safety by the F.D.A. and haven’t been reviewed since,” he said. “So titanium dioxide is part of a bigger story about regulatory failure.”

That’s why legislators have introduced bills that would require the F.D.A. to [better ensure the safety](#) of chemicals before they are added to food and to [regularly assess](#) them for safety. Barring that, it’s left up to each food company to decide if it will include additives like titanium dioxide in their products, just as it’s up to individual consumers to decide if they will eat them.

As for Skittles in particular, Dr. Nestle said that since there are suspicions that the additive may be carcinogenic, “Mars should take it out. They shouldn’t be using it.” She added, “Why take a chance?”

Should this affect your choices in the supermarket? And will this affect the outcome of the lawsuit against Mars Inc.? It seems that the jury is still out.

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HEADLINE	07/26 How climate change affecting flooding?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/article/flooding-climate-change.html">https://www.nytimes.com/article/flooding-climate-change.html</a>
GIST	<p>Floods can surge all year round, in every region of the world. But discerning the relationship between any given flood and climate change is no small feat, experts say, made difficult by limited historical records, particularly for the most extreme floods, which occur infrequently.</p> <p>It can be tempting to attribute all floods and other extreme events to the forces of warming planet. But weather is not climate, even though weather can be affected by climate. For example, scientists are confident that climate change makes unusually hot days more common. They’re not as sure that climate change is <a href="#">making tornadoes more severe</a>.</p> <p>Floods fall somewhere along the confidence spectrum between heat waves (“yes, clearly”) and tornadoes (“we don’t know yet”), said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at University of California, Los Angeles. “I’d say, ‘yes, probably, but...’”</p> <p>Flooding, like other disasters, involves a number of competing factors that may affect its frequency and intensity in opposing ways. Climate change, which is worsening extreme rainfall in many storms, is an increasingly important part of the mix.</p> <p><b>What causes floods</b></p>

Several main ingredients contribute to flood development: precipitation, snowmelt, topography and how wet the soil is. Depending on the type of the flood, some factors may matter more than others.

For example, a river flood, also known as a fluvial flood, occurs when a river, stream or lake overflows with water, often following heavy rainfall or quickly melting snow. A coastal flood occurs when land areas near the coast are inundated by water, often following a severe storm that collides with high tides.

Flooding can also happen in areas with no nearby bodies of water. Flash floods, in particular, can develop anywhere that experiences intense rainfall over a short period of time.

### **How floods are measured**

Many metrics are used to measure floods, including stage height (the height of the water in a river relative to a specific point) and flow rate (how much water passes by a specific location over a particular time period).

To describe the severity of a flood, though, experts will often use the more simple term “a 100-year flood,” to describe a flood that has a 1 percent chance of striking in any given year, considered an extreme and rare occurrence. The term is just a description of likelihood, though, not a promise. A region can have two 100-year floods within a few years.

### **Have floods increased in past decades?**

Not exactly. Climate change has undoubtedly intensified heavy precipitation events, but, unexpectedly, there has been [no corresponding increase in flood events](#).

When it comes to river floods, climate change is likely exacerbating the frequency and intensity of the extreme flood events, but decreasing the number of moderate floods, researchers found in [a 2021 study published in Nature](#).

As the climate warms, higher rates of evaporation cause soils to dry out more rapidly. For those moderate and more commonplace floods, the initial conditions of soil moisture is important, since drier soils may be able to absorb most of the rainfall.

With larger flood events, that initial soil moisture matters less “because there’s so much water that the soil wouldn’t be able to absorb all of it, anyway,” said Manuela Brunner, a hydrologist at the University of Freiburg in Germany and the lead author of the 2021 study. Any additional water added past the point where the soil is fully saturated will run off and contribute to flood development, Dr. Brunner said.

### **Looking to the future**

Scientists are confident some types of flooding will increase in the “business as usual” scenario where humans continue warming the planet with greenhouse gas emissions at the current rate.

First, coastal flooding will continue to increase as sea levels rise. Melting glaciers and ice sheets add volume to the ocean, and the water itself expands as it warms.

Second, flash flooding will continue to increase as there are more extreme precipitation events. Warmer temperatures increase evaporation, putting more moisture into the atmosphere that then gets released as rain or snowfall.

Researchers also expect that, as the climate warms, flash floods will get “flashier,” meaning that the timing of the floods will get shorter while the magnitude gets higher. Flashier floods can be more dangerous and destructive.

Flash floods may also increasingly follow catastrophic wildfires in a deadly [cascade of climate disasters](#). That’s because wildfires destroy forests and other vegetation, which in turn weakens the soil and makes it less permeable.

	<p>If heavy rains occur on land damaged by a fire, the water “does not get absorbed by the land surface as effectively as it once did,” said Andrew Hoell, a meteorologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Physical Sciences Lab.</p> <p>Though it may be counterintuitive to see the two extremes, too much fire and too much water, in the same region, the sight will most likely become more common, particularly in the American West.</p> <p><b>Are different areas experiencing flooding?</b></p> <p>In a <a href="#">recent paper published in Nature</a>, researchers found that in the future, flash floods may be more common farther north, in Northern Rockies and Northern Plains states.</p> <p>This poses a risk for flood mitigation efforts, as local governments may not be aware of the future flash flood risk, said Zhi Li, lead author of the 2022 study.</p> <p>The pattern is driven by more rapidly melting snow, and snow that melts earlier in the year, Dr. Li said. Regions at higher latitudes may experience more “rain-on-snow” floods like those that <a href="#">surged through Yellowstone in June</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Small plane crashes into Puget Sound</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/small-plane-crashes-into-puget-sound-waters-near-seattles-alki-beach">https://www.q13fox.com/news/small-plane-crashes-into-puget-sound-waters-near-seattles-alki-beach</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - A plane crashed into Puget Sound waters Tuesday afternoon near Seattle's Alki Beach, according to Seattle Police.</p> <p>The Federal Aviation Administration confirmed a single-engine Cessna 150 crashed into the water near Alki Beach just before 4:30 p.m. Tuesday.</p> <p>Video captured by witnesses shows the plane touch down into the water, then lurch forward and begin sinking. Bystanders quickly rushed in to help the pilot out.</p> <p>"I was putting my feet in the water and then I saw the plane coming and then it flipped over and then the plane was sinking," said 10-year-old Zahra, who witnessed the crash.</p> <p>Medics were called just before 4:30 p.m. Tuesday to 64th Ave SW and Alki Ave SW to the report of a plane crash. The FAA confirmed just one person was aboard the plane. The pilot was not injured.</p> <p>"He was going down like he knew what he was doing. He was just going down and just went smoothly and he just went in there. He got out and he would just sit there," one witness said.</p> <p>"He got guts. And he was very calm, but that's what they're learning to do. I wanted to say 'good job,'" another witness said.</p> <p>The plane completely submerged shortly after.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Bomb threat reroutes Seattle inbound flight</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/bomb-threat-reroutes-germany-to-seattle-flight-iceland/SD3CTNL5YRANTHKDZ5IF2QUMUE/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/bomb-threat-reroutes-germany-to-seattle-flight-iceland/SD3CTNL5YRANTHKDZ5IF2QUMUE/</a>
GIST	<p>A bomb threat written on the mirror of an airplane restroom forced a Seattle-bound Condor flight from Germany to turn around over Greenland and make an emergency landing in Iceland.</p> <p>The flight was a Condor Airlines Boeing 767 with 266 people on board.</p>

Passengers told KIRO 7 News the plane suddenly turned, and because of an “operational error,” the plane needed to make an emergency landing.

Passengers said the crew would not give out any information, and they appeared to be distressed.

After the passengers deboarded onto the tarmac, they said they were questioned in Reykjavik for hours.

Nick Wayne, a teenage professional wrestler from Seattle, accompanied by his mother, Shayna Edwards, described their experience with KIRO 7 News.

“We landed in Iceland in the middle of an empty tarmac, away from anything and everything. When we got off the plane, we exited the back through some mobile steps, and we were met with armed guards with very big guns,” Shayna said. “They took us down into groups, made us leave our belongings ... on the tarmac.”

“At this time, we still don’t know what’s going on. Then word started spreading amongst people that there was a bomb on the plane. That was what we learned,” Shayna continued.

Investigators never found a bomb on the plane, but they did later reveal to the passengers that someone had written “bomb on plane” in makeup, and that’s what started the emergency.

Shayna and Nick landed back safely in Seattle this afternoon.

They said investigators questioned everyone, but they never figured out who wrote the threat on the bathroom mirror.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Scientists: coronavirus from Wuhan market</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2022/07/26/coronavirus-origin-wuhan-market/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2022/07/26/coronavirus-origin-wuhan-market/</a>
GIST	<p>The coronavirus pandemic began in separate viral spillovers — at least two but perhaps as many as two dozen — from live animals sold and butchered in late 2019 at the Huanan Seafood Market in Wuhan, China, according to two papers published Tuesday in the journal Science.</p> <p>The publication of the papers, which underwent five months of peer review and revisions by the authors, is unlikely to quell the rancorous debate about how the pandemic began and whether the virus emerged from a Chinese laboratory. And the authors acknowledge there are many unknowns requiring further investigation — most notably, which animals were involved.</p> <p>“Everything upstream of this — which animals, where did they come from, how it’s all connected — is completely unknown at this stage,” Kristian Andersen, an immunologist at Scripps Research, said in a media briefing Tuesday.</p> <p>“Have we disproven the lab leak theory? No, we have not. Will we ever be able to? No. But there are ‘possible’ scenarios and there are ‘plausible’ scenarios ... ‘Possible’ does not mean equally likely,” Andersen said.</p> <p>A natural origin of the pandemic — a “zoonosis” — has long been a favored theory among scientists for the simple reason that most pandemics, including the SARS coronavirus outbreak of 2002-2003, have started that way. Andersen and his colleagues believe multiple lines of evidence, including the clustering of early cases of COVID-19 around the market, make a market origin not only a likely scenario but the only one that fits the data.</p> <p>The “lab leak” conjecture was initially dismissed in most mainstream media as a conspiracy theory. There are numerous lab leak scenarios, and many have focused on the Wuhan Institute of Virology, a major research center that studies coronaviruses.</p>

Scientists there say they never had the virus in their laboratory. But outside experts questioned whether the laboratory adhered sufficiently to safety measures when researching viruses. Chinese authorities limited access to the laboratories by outside investigators. Amateur sleuths created online communities that steadily raised suspicions about a possible lab leak. Pressure to investigate the hypothesis came amid the struggles of the scientific community to nail down how the virus entered the human population.

In May 2021, the journal *Science* published a letter from 18 scientists calling for an investigation into the virus's origin that would include exploration of the lab leak theory. Soon after that, President Joe Biden asked his intelligence agencies to investigate all possible origins of the pandemic. The review concluded that the virus was not an engineered bioweapon, but otherwise failed to reach a conclusion about where it came from.

Among the scientists who signed the letter to *Science* was Michael Worobey, an evolutionary virologist at the University of Arizona who felt the lab leak thesis deserved attention even if it wasn't the most likely origin. But Worobey soon became convinced that the virus came out of the market. Worobey is the lead author of the new paper that contends the market was the pandemic's epicenter.

The researchers scoured data about the earliest patients, many of whom had direct links to the market or lived nearby. The geography of early community spread showed infections radiating outward from the vicinity of the market, Worobey said: "It's an insane bull's-eye."

Moreover, when the market was first identified as the site of a cluster of cases, Chinese investigators took environmental samples searching for traces of the virus. A disproportionate number of positive virus traces came from the section of the market where live animals had been sold, the new study reports.

"The virus started spreading in people who worked at the market, but then started spreading in the surrounding local community as vendors went to local shops, and infected people who worked in those shops," Worobey suggested.

Worobey is not new to this issue. Last year, he wrote a "Perspective" article in *Science* that said the geographical clustering of cases in and around the market could not be explained away as "ascertainment bias," meaning the clustering was not simply the result of investigators knocking on doors in that area after the market outbreak was detected.

He believes any alternative scenario — such as a lab leak — is implausible.

"If others want to argue with that, they're now essentially taking a pseudoscientific approach," Worobey said in an interview Tuesday. "Even though you don't have the smoking gun of, 'Yes we've sampled the raccoon dog with the virus in December,' when you put it all together, it's the only theory that actually explains all the data."

Angela Rasmussen, a virologist at the University of Saskatchewan and co-author of one of the new papers, said in an email that she agreed with Worobey: "There is no alternative explanation that fits the facts, so anyone trying to come up with one will have to become adept at willful ignorance, a logical contortionist, or simply a fabulist."

The contention by the authors of a natural origin of the pandemic is not new: The same two papers in an earlier form were posted online in February on a "preprint" site. But at that point, they existed in peer-review limbo — something that could be reported in a news story but lacking the stature of studies that have survived scrutiny by knowledgeable outsiders and journal editors.

The second paper published Tuesday in *Science* reports that genetic evidence and computer modeling suggest the virus spilled into the human population not just once, but on multiple occasions in late 2019. Genomic analysis of early cases shows two distinct lineages, called A and B, that had to have come from

separate spillovers. Both lineages were found in environmental samples taken in the market, according to a preprint paper from Chinese researchers in February.

Promoters of the lab leak theory counter that the market was more likely a superspreader site. The virus could have been brought there by someone infected at a laboratory, or someone exposed to an infected lab worker, for example.

The argument for a market origin also relies on Chinese data that may be unreliable, Jesse Bloom, a virologist at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Institute, said in an interview earlier this year. He said he feels the data are “inconclusive.”

“I feel the data released by the Chinese government should be treated with a healthy grain of salt,” Bloom said.

There is no proof that the virus or its immediate ancestor was in any laboratory before the outbreak in Wuhan. But the ongoing mystery of the pandemic’s origin has called attention to the kind of research on viruses — including “gain of function” experiments — that some critics say is too risky. The U.S. National Institutes of Health, immersed in the controversy because it helped fund some research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, this year said it was reviewing its policies for ensuring laboratory safety and security.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., who favors a laboratory origin explanation, said at an April 30 rally in Kentucky that if Republicans take power in the Senate after the midterm elections, he will use subpoena power to “get to the bottom of where this virus came from.”

Chinese scientists have denied that the virus was present in their lab. The virus, according to Andersen and other virologists who have studied it, does not appear to be manipulated or engineered, and its genetic features could have been produced through evolution.

Still, the controversy about coronavirus research is not likely to fade.

Jeffrey Sachs, a Columbia University economist, heads a commission sponsored by the Lancet journal expected to produce a report this fall on the pandemic, including the origin of the virus. He recently co-authored an article in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences calling for a probe of the pandemic origin through a “bipartisan congressional inquiry with full investigative powers.”

On Tuesday, after Science published the two papers, Sachs said in an email that he still favors the lab leak theory: “The two competing hypotheses, natural spillover and laboratory creation, are both viable. They should be compared directly against each other. In my view, the laboratory creation hypothesis is the more straightforward and more credible.”

The new papers do not declare “case closed” but are useful, noted David Relman, a professor of medicine and microbiology at Stanford University who was among the signers of the 2021 letter to Science calling for a probe of all possible pandemic origins. He said he would like to see a similarly thorough forensic study of the lab leak hypothesis.

“I don’t think we can say that we now know that it started here. I think we can say that something interesting happened in this part of the city,” Relman said. “We don’t have any [coronavirus] positive animals at the market.”

Andersen, the Scripps Research scientist, has been entangled in the virus origin controversy for more than two years. He was lead author of an early paper, published in Nature Medicine, saying the virus was clearly not engineered. But his first impression of the virus had been that it looked unnatural, and only after doing more research did he conclude that its features could have been produced through evolution.



	<p>On Tuesday, Andersen reiterated that he initially thought the novel coronavirus probably came from a laboratory. But all signs now point to the market, he said.</p> <p>“It’s not a formal proof, again, but it is so strong in my opinion that any other views, a lab leak for example, would have to be able to explain all of this evidence,” he said. “It’s just not possible.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Human remains Lake Mead: 3<sup>rd</sup> discovery</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/us/lake-mead-human-remains.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/us/lake-mead-human-remains.html</a>
GIST	<p>Human remains were discovered at Lake Mead National Recreational Area in Nevada on Monday, the third such discovery in recent months as the lake has reached dangerously low water levels, the authorities said.</p> <p>A witness reported discovering human remains at Swim Beach, on the western edge of the lake, on Monday afternoon, <a href="#">the National Park Service said in a statement</a>.</p> <p>No other information was provided. It was unclear how long the remains had been at the lake or how they were discovered. The Clark County Medical Examiner will determine the cause of death, officials said.</p> <p>The National Park Service did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Tuesday.</p> <p>Officials were later seen carrying the remains in a black body bag, <a href="#">according to video from Fox 5</a>, a local news channel.</p> <p>While it was unclear if the dropping water levels at the lake led to the discovery on Monday, they have played a role in other discoveries this year.</p> <p>In early May, the remains of a person killed about 40 years ago <a href="#">were found in a metal barrel</a> on the lake’s shore. Weeks later, another set of remains <a href="#">was found half-buried in sand</a>.</p> <p>Lake Mead, about 40 miles east of Las Vegas, is the largest man-made reservoir in the United States, having been formed by the construction of the Hoover Dam in the 1930s. The lake is also a critical source of water for 25 million people across seven states, including some of the country’s largest agricultural valleys.</p> <p>The lake’s water level has dropped by nearly 150 feet since 2000 because of “drought and climate change,” <a href="#">according to the Southern Nevada Water Authority</a>.</p> <p>Last summer, the federal government <a href="#">declared a water shortage at the lake</a> for the first time, prompting cuts in the water supply that mostly affected Arizona farmers at the time. In June, the Bureau of Reclamation, which oversees water and power in the West, <a href="#">issued an emergency request</a> to states to propose immediate cuts for 2023 to help prevent the reservoirs from further declining.</p> <p>New images, <a href="#">taken by NASA in 2000 and 2022 and released this month</a>, show the lake’s condition worsening, as evident by the so-called bathtub ring, remnants of salts and minerals left behind on the canyon walls by receding water.</p> <p>The images display the driest two-decade period since A.D. 800, <a href="#">according to a recent analysis of tree-ring data</a>.</p> <p>Human-caused global warming has played a role in the continuation of the current drought, researchers said, adding that it has persisted despite periods of good precipitation over the past 20 years. One reason for that may be that rising temperatures, more than rain and snow conditions, are driving this drought.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/26 Vancouver B.C. tests govt.-issue fentanyl
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/health/fentanyl-vancouver-drugs.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/health/fentanyl-vancouver-drugs.html</a>
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, British Columbia — The place where Chris gets his fentanyl is bright and airy, all blond wood and exposed brick. The staff is friendly and knowledgeable about the potency of the pills he can crush, cook and inject.</p> <p>Soft pop music played, and an attendant spritzed a bit of Covid-cautious spray on his seat before he settled into a booth on a recent afternoon with a couple of red-and-yellow pills, a tourniquet, a tiny candle and a lighter.</p> <p>“The best thing about this is the guarantee: I can come in here four times a day and get it,” Chris said. He no longer spends all of his waking hours in a frantic scrabble of panhandling and “other stuff” to scrape up the cash to pay a dealer. He won’t get arrested — and he won’t overdose and die using a drug that is not what it is sold as.</p> <p>This fentanyl dispensary is legal, and Canada’s public health system finances it.</p> <p>It is the latest and perhaps most radical step in a city that has consistently been at the leading edge of experiments in “harm reduction,” an approach to reducing deaths and severe illness from illicit drugs by making the drugs safer for people who use them. Harm reduction, even in basic forms such as the distribution of clean needles, remains deeply controversial in the United States, although the concept has been gaining fitful support as overdoses rise, including from the Biden administration.</p> <p>But the breadth of Vancouver’s services and interventions are almost unimaginable in the United States, less than an hour’s drive to the south. Supervised injection sites and biometric machines that dispense prescription hydromorphone dot the city center; naloxone kits, which reverse overdoses, are available free in every pharmacy; last year, a big downtown hospital opened a safer-use site next to the cafeteria, to keep patients who are drug users from leaving in order to stave off withdrawal.</p> <p>And since April, Chris, a wiry, soft-spoken 30-year-old who wanted to be identified by only his first name to protect his privacy, has received pharmaceutical-grade fentanyl through the dispensary, which sells to those who can pay and provides free drugs through the program’s operational budget to those who cannot.</p> <p>The new program aims to provide a safer alternative to the fentanyl available on the streets, where the supply is increasingly lethal and is responsible for most of the overdose epidemic that was declared a public health emergency here six years ago.</p> <p>Dr. Christy Sutherland, a board-certified addiction medicine specialist who set up the program, said its goal was, first, to keep people from dying, and, second, to help bring stability to their lives so that they may think about what they might want to change.</p> <p>Chris started using pills recreationally in his teens, then moved to heroin. But the heroin supply in Vancouver was taken over about a decade ago by fentanyl, an opioid that is 50 to 100 times more potent and thus far more profitable for the cartels that sell it.</p> <p>Overdose deaths have surged in British Columbia since the start of the Covid pandemic, as they have across the rest of North America. Some 2,200 people died of overdoses in the province last year, among the 115,000 lives lost to drugs in Canada and the United States during that time. The mounting toll has spurred communities to search for new solutions, and this city has tried more of them, faster, than anywhere else.</p> <p>Vancouver’s experiments have government support and are paid for by the public health system on the expectation that they will save not only lives but also taxpayer dollars — in reduced emergency services and hospitalizations.</p>

But there is concern from both the general public and some addiction medicine specialists here. They say that the latest efforts go too far, diverting resources from proven treatments to experiments that have not been shown to reduce drug use or save lives, and risking an increase in the numbers of both users and deaths. Supplying drugs is for criminals, not health clinics, they say.

“These are highly potent substances that produce quite a bit of harm,” said Dr. Launette Rieb, an addiction medicine physician who has worked for decades with drug users in Vancouver. “When access increases, costs go down and perception of risk goes down.”

Evidence of the effectiveness of these interventions in saving lives is limited, she said.

A clinical trial in Vancouver found that providing injectable heroin to patients who had not responded to other forms of treatment helped them reduce their use, stay tied to health care and improve their quality of life, compared with users who were given methadone. Another found a similar benefit from prescribed hydromorphone. Research on the fentanyl program has just begun but will track whether it shows a similar benefit, which could justify expanding it.

In June, British Columbia received an exemption from federal drug laws that will allow the province to decriminalize individual possession of up to 2.5 grams of hard drugs, starting early next year. The police will no longer confiscate small amounts of drugs, and no user will be required to seek treatment to avoid arrest, but drug trafficking and production will still be crimes.

The decriminalization is a significant step beyond Canada’s legalization of cannabis use in 2018. Proponents say it should be a first move toward a regulated government supply of all drugs as the best way to respond to growing toxicity, which is the immediate cause of overdose deaths.

Fentanyl has largely displaced heroin and the opioid painkillers Dilaudid and OxyContin as the illicit drug most used in Vancouver, a shift underway throughout North America. It is also often cut into other drugs, including non-opioid prescription medications such as the attention deficit disorder medicine Adderall, which is sold on the street as a stimulant. Its potency and users’ inability to know what they are buying or how strong it will be have led to the huge surge in overdoses.

Dr. Sutherland, an effervescent, fast-talking 41-year-old, is the medical director of a social service agency called the Portland Hotel Society. It serves the Downtown Eastside, a neighborhood that has long been the site of intense drug use and advocacy by and for drug users. It was home to North America’s first needle exchange, first supervised injection site and first prescription heroin program.

Dr. Sutherland said she was tired of responding to overdoses on the sidewalk outside her clinic, knowing that if she could go back in time 10 minutes and give people safer drugs, she wouldn’t be trying to save their lives.

She began her medical practice working with homeless people. She said that those patients, and others living on the social margins, shifted her thinking on drug use from “Drugs are bad and are outlawed to keep people safe” to seeing addiction as a disease that she could help people overcome. Now she takes it one step further with a view that is gaining traction in British Columbia: There will always be people who use drugs, so all drugs — not just alcohol and tobacco — should be regulated by the government and sold in a controlled, legal market.

“Treatment and recovery is not the answer to a toxic drug supply. Getting rid of the toxic drug or giving alternatives to the toxic drug supply is,” she said. “You can start there and talk about treatment and recovery down the road a bit.”

It’s not realistic to think that people will abstain from substances, she said, and so the role of the state should be to keep substances safe and take access out of the hands of organized crime.

Back in 2010, Dr. Sutherland began prescribing what is called opiate agonist therapy, or medication-assisted treatment, to patients who were using street drugs. That includes methadone, Suboxone and Kadian, long-acting opioids that satiate the craving for an opiate without providing the high. She helped stabilize many users and connect them with treatment to stop using all together. But some intended to keep using, and the therapy failed for others, and Dr. Sutherland concluded that what those users needed was safer drugs.

So she started to provide a replacement for the street drugs, first Dilaudid, then fentanyl patches, and, now, the fentanyl capsules. Her project purchases the fentanyl from a pharmaceutical manufacturer, and a local pharmacy compounds it, with dextrose and caffeine as buffers. The pills are sold at \$10 a hit, priced to match the street rate exactly.

Dr. Sutherland writes a prescription for the drug, and patients buy it; if they can't pay, the program covers the cost.

When nurses enroll new participants in the program, they increase the dose over days to find exactly what the patients need to replace what they use on the street. Participants use the drugs under supervision at first, to make sure they have the amount they need to avoid withdrawal (and no more, so that there is no risk they will sell excess on the street.) Then, they can take the drugs off-site to use.

Chris has been a daily user of illicit drugs since he was a teenager. He receives 30,000 micrograms of fentanyl at the dispensary each day. That is vastly more than would kill a nonuser — a doctor would typically prescribe about 50 micrograms temporarily to manage pain — but, after years of use, it is what Chris needs to feel a quick rush of euphoria and prevent withdrawal. He said he hoped to return to working soon and then would start buying from the program, the way he would patronize a liquor store.

Dr. Sutherland expects that patients such as Chris may gradually reduce the amount they use, because they're not worried about how they will score the next hit to keep the agony of withdrawal — being "dope sick" — at bay.

Lisa James personifies the anticipated benefit of programs like this. Ms. James, who is 53, spent 18 years addicted to heroin. For the first eight, every day began the same grim cycle: She'd go out in the morning and steal from stores, then pass the merchandise to her boyfriend, who would resell it and use the money to buy heroin. He'd bring it home, where she was waiting anxiously, already nauseated and twitchy with dope sickness.

"Doctors would all say the same thing, 'Go to detox and go to meetings,'" Ms. James said. "And when you're that far down in it, that's like a lifetime away. You can't even imagine getting through two days, never mind going into detox."

Ms. James failed repeatedly at treatment. What turned her life around wasn't quitting heroin but rather receiving pure medical-grade heroin from the Crosstown Clinic, which is run by the British Columbia health care system and provides the drug free of charge. When she was taken on as a client there a decade ago, Ms. James stopped stealing, stopped hustling and was able to set down the constant terror of wondering if she would be able to buy the next hit. She got a job, and the Crosstown staff helped her find an airy apartment in the suburbs to share with her daughter.

She may one day stop using heroin, she said, but she doesn't need to decide that now. "With this program, even if I have to keep using something to stay off street drugs, I'm willing to do that," she said. "I feel really lucky to live here."

But critics of this and other safer-supply initiatives reject this idea, arguing that opioid use disorder is a brain disease and one that can be effectively treated. Dr. Annabel Mead, a Vancouver addiction specialist, said her initial hesitancy about safer-supply programs — should a doctor whose first rule is "do no harm" give out highly addictive drugs? — had been reinforced by the growing number of children she sees at B.C. Children's Hospital who have overdosed.

She said that a hydromorphone dispensing program, set up to try to help people with addictions to isolate during Covid lockdowns, was partly to blame for a surge in teen use: Drug users prescribed Dilaudid are selling pills to young people and using the money to buy fentanyl that has the potency they are used to, she said.

In the meantime, she added, the province is spending too little on abstinence-based treatment; there is a nine-month waiting list for the main residential women's treatment program. Many skeptics of safer supply here argue that treatment that aims to help people stop using is being shortchanged, but British Columbia's 2021 budget designated \$330 million for new treatment and recovery services for substance use, which was an increase. The total far outweighs the spending on safer supply..

Some people say the steps in Vancouver don't go far enough. The Crosstown Clinic has 116 people on its prescription heroin and Dilaudid programs. Dr. Sutherland thinks she can supply about 100 people with fentanyl, for now. Several hundred people are also receiving safer drugs through their pharmacy under prescribing guidelines that the provincial government loosened in the first days of the pandemic, when supervised injection sites were closed.

But there are [more than 85,000 people at risk of overdose in British Columbia](#) every day, from daily users on the street to occasional users who don't live anywhere near a supervised injection site.

"Harm-reduction services are like a candle for lighting something, a tiny intervention into this monstrous toxic cesspool of fentanyl and its analogues," said Donald MacPherson, director of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition and professor at Simon Fraser University.

He added, "We need to do something big." The rate of death demands much more sweeping intervention, he said. "The incremental is no good. No more pilot projects."

[Dr. Bonnie Henry](#), British Columbia's health officer, said there was little choice but to move incrementally.

"Incrementalism is the only way it's going to work," she said. "We have to evaluate it, and the evaluating has to be done independently by somebody who's not committed to seeing it fail or to seeing it succeed."

At the same time, she is part of a community that includes government, researchers, doctors and drug users, all trying to envision what a new, safe, regulated market could look like. "People don't deserve to die because of the toxicity of the street supply," she said. "So how else can we help?"

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HEADLINE	07/25 'Murder hornet' has a new name
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/murder-hornets-given-new-common-name-by-entomologists">https://komonews.com/news/local/murder-hornets-given-new-common-name-by-entomologists</a>
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — The invasive hornet found in Washington state that has been referred to as the Asian giant hornet or murder hornet has a new name.</p> <p>Washington state Department of Agriculture officials said Monday that the Entomological Society of America (ESA) has adopted "northern giant hornet" for the species <i>Vespa mandarinia</i> in its Common Names of Insects and Related Organisms List.</p> <p>There has been no official ESA common name since its introduction in North America became widely known in 2020, officials said. Washington state will use the new common name.</p> <p>The proposal to establish a common name came from Dr. Chris Looney, who has been actively involved in the state's hornet research and efforts to eradicate northern giant hornet from Washington, officials said.</p>

	<p>The new name is intended to comply with ESA's insect common names guidelines, which include avoiding naming insects using geographic regions.</p> <p>The northern giant hornet is native to Asia and has been the target of eradication efforts in Washington state and British Columbia, Canada, after hornets were first discovered in both locations in 2019.</p> <p>The insects are the world's largest hornets, with queens reaching up to 2 inches (5 centimeters) long. They are considered invasive in North America for their ability to kill other bee and hornet species, which is how they got the nickname "murder hornets."</p> <p>Scientists believe the hornets in the U.S. are confined in Whatcom County, which is located on the Canadian border north of Seattle. Washington state entomologists have so far eradicated four northern giant hornet nests.</p> <p>Scientists said in May they were setting about 1,000 hornet traps in the area in 2022. Hornets caught in traps help scientists find the location of nests.</p>
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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Honduras cocaine queen extradited to US</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/5d3gxd/la-chinda-herlina-bobadilla-cocaine-extradition">https://www.vice.com/en/article/5d3gxd/la-chinda-herlina-bobadilla-cocaine-extradition</a>
GIST	<p>Honduras just put one of its most notorious suspected drug bosses on a plane to the United States.</p> <p>Herlinda Bobadilla, alias “La Chinda,” is the 62-year-old alleged matriarch of the Montes drug cartel. She allegedly ran a cocaine trafficking network with her sons that used a fleet of planes, trucks, and boats to move product from South America north toward the U.S. Her extradition comes a little over two months after her arrest.</p> <p>Bobadilla and her family allegedly worked in the drug trade as far back as 2006, according to U.S. authorities, but its roots may go back even further. The Montes cartel was <a href="#">reportedly founded in the 1980s</a> by Pedro García Montes, a Honduran national who worked with Colombia’s Cali Cartel. Assassins gunned down García Montes on a beach in Colombia in 2004. The group then reportedly was taken over by his cousin Alex Montes—a fourth son of Bobadilla. Alex Montes died of a heart attack in 2014.</p> <p>Over the years the family played <a href="#">an important role</a> in cocaine smuggling routes. They allegedly received shipments of cocaine mostly from Colombia and Venezuela, then worked with their local contacts to move the product through Honduras and Guatemala to Mexican cartels. The Mexican cartels would then smuggle the cocaine into the U.S.</p> <p>Honduran <a href="#">authorities originally captured Bobadilla</a> in the mountains of the northeastern province of Colon on May 15. Another one of her sons, Tito Montes, was killed during the operation after he opened fire on police, according to authorities. Authorities had reportedly received numerous tips after the U.S. government <a href="#">placed a \$5 million bounty</a> on each of the heads of Bobadilla and Tito Montes, along with a third son named Juan Carlos Montes, on May 2. Juan Carlos Montes remains on the lam. A fourth son, Noe, was extradited to the U.S. in 2019 and is serving a 37-year-sentence for his role in the organization’s illicit activities.</p> <p>The extradition of Bobadilla is the latest from the <a href="#">new government of Xiomara Castro</a>, who entered office in January. Castro vowed to end narco-corruption once she was in office.</p> <p>Within weeks of entering office, her predecessor Juan Orlando Hernández was arrested for allegedly being <a href="#">involved in the drug trade</a> while serving as the president of Honduras from January 2014 until this past January. U.S. authorities had tried numerous Honduran nationals on drug charges tied to Hernández</p>



	during his presidency, <a href="#">including his brother Tony</a> . Tony Hernández is now serving a life sentence in the U.S.
	Two months after the former president’s arrest, he too <a href="#">was extradited</a> to the U.S. in April.
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Burden of court fines vary by race, county</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://crosscut.com/equity/2022/07/full-injustice-burden-court-fines-vary-race-county-wa">https://crosscut.com/equity/2022/07/full-injustice-burden-court-fines-vary-race-county-wa</a>
GIST	<p>Nathaniel Sanders still remembers what he said when the judge ordered him to pay \$65,000 in restitution and other court fees decades ago.</p> <p>“I made a joke, ‘Do you know what the interest is going to be on this? When I get released, you might as well give me a gun, a pager and a bag of drugs so I can pay this off,’” Sanders recalls.</p> <p>Sanders, a 60-year-old Air Force veteran, was in prison for 27 years for <a href="#">shooting at a police officer during a high-speed chase</a>, a crime he says he’s extremely remorseful for. But now that he’s served his time in prison, Sanders’ fears about the court fines have been realized: The roughly \$65,000 the King County court ordered him to pay back in 1995 for the property damage from the chase has ballooned, with interest, to \$250,000 today.</p> <p>Sanders doesn’t know how to rebuild his finances or find a place to live. He’s currently living with his 90-year-old mother in Seattle, and he’s constantly doing mental calculations. How many years of work does he have in him? Can he one day retire? Will he ever pay off this debt?</p> <p>“How do you pay off a quarter-million debt when you’re unemployed and trying to do everything else — pay probation costs, find a place to live in Seattle, pay insurance and the cost of daily life?” Sanders said. “Imagine all that on top of a quarter-million debt. It’s inconceivable.”</p> <p>Legal financial obligations, or LFOs, can burden people with suffocating debt long after they’ve done their time in prison. Yet the way court fines and fees are imposed in Washington can depend both on who you are and where the crime occurred. Black, Indigenous and Latino people are given more LFOs at higher rates than Asian or White people, a 2021 Seattle University School of Law study found. Meanwhile, counties and judges vary widely in how they assess and collect legal financial obligations, according to a <a href="#">recent report by the Washington State Supreme Court Minority and Justice Commission</a>. Rural counties may rely more on these fines and fees to subsidize their budget, and some courts may see them as necessary punishment for those convicted of crimes.</p> <p>Recent state legislation has improved the system, advocates say. In 2018, the state passed a bill that, in part, ensures that courts can’t jail a person for these debts unless they have the means to pay. And this year, a new law passed that gives judges discretion to waive certain court fees while allowing people with LFO debt to get relief from fines and fees if they show they have an inability to pay.</p> <p>But experts say disparities in court debt by geography and race persist. Alexes Harris, a sociology professor at University of Washington who has spent decades studying monetary sanctions here and elsewhere, said only radical change can make a meaningful difference.</p> <p>“It’s still variable by county in terms of the amount of fines and fees that you’re going to get, and the consequences for not being able to pay them,” Harris said. “Our system is so full of injustice, both racial and economic, that a system of monetary sanctions based on financial penalties can never be just. In my mind, we just need to abolish it.”</p> <p><b>Worth the cost?</b></p> <p>The number of court fines and fees doled out in Washington has increased dramatically since the 1980s. That’s mainly for two reasons, said Evan Walker, a policy analyst for the left-leaning Washington State Budget &amp; Policy Center. For one, it was seen by some in the criminal justice system as a rightful punishment for a crime. And two: Counties feel they need the money to make up for a lack of state</p>

funding — Washington ranks among the bottom in the country in state funding for trial courts, federal statistics show.

“The increased need for making up government revenue since the ’70s and ’80s has really influenced why agencies have gotten to this point,” Walker said.

Research backs this up. Earlier this year, a report from the Washington State Supreme Court Minority and Justice Commission studied the state’s system of legal financial obligations. Paid for with a federal grant, the study found that the state’s “particularly challenging court funding scheme” produces “vast disparities among counties, cities, and even judges in how court fees are imposed and enforced across the state.”

Some counties impose harsher court fees than others. Historically, those counties have also been politically conservative, said Harris. She found in a 2004 analysis that counties with higher percentages of people voting Republican in the presidential election tended to sentence defendants to higher court fines and fees.

Some court fines and fees in Washington are mandatory for every judge. For each felony or gross misdemeanor conviction in Superior Court, there’s a mandatory \$500 “Victim Penalty Assessment.” There’s also a \$100 DNA collection fee for many defendants’ first convictions. Courts can also order restitution, meant for convicts who caused injury to a person or damage to property.

These fines and fees can grow rapidly with interest. Washington allows a 12% interest rate on restitution, though recent legislation prohibited that rate on non-restitution. Washington law allows private collection agencies to charge up to 50% *on top* of the existing debt — more than many other states allow.

And the leniency of a certain judge or jurisdiction can play a major role in how much debt accrues. A research report in 2018 revealed the case of a Latino man in Washington who had his LFO interest deferred until after his 13-year prison sentence. But while in custody, he was charged with an additional felony in Walla Walla, where a judge *did not* grant him deferred interest.

“He reported that, due to the different approaches of presiding judges, his Walla Walla debt had more than doubled by the time he was released,” the 2017 [report](#) by Harris and others states. “He had perceived his King County debt as more manageable and had decided to only make payments toward that LFO.”

Meanwhile, some counties have jailed people for not paying their court debts. Benton County, for example, had a practice of arresting people or forcing manual labor for not paying these debts until 2016, when they [settled a class-action lawsuit](#). Spokane County, too, [settled a class-action lawsuit](#) in 2014 accusing it of jailing more than 1,000 people over a six-year period for not paying court fees.

But courts collect only a small fraction of the fines and fees that they give out. From 2014-16, superior courts in Washington imposed \$130 million in legal financial obligations, yet collected just \$7 million, according to the Minority and Justice Commission report. District and municipal courts imposed \$88 million yet collected just \$4 million. And many counties add an *additional* fee just for collecting the court debt in the first place. Clerks said that without the fee, they would have to ease up on their efforts to collect these debts.

“I’m not sure if we could continue our program if we lose the fee entirely,” one clerk reported.

### **Perpetuating poverty**

Not only are court fees imposed unevenly across the state, but they hit those who already are low-income, hampering their ability to rebuild their life after prison.

In 2008, Chanel Rhymes took a plea deal on a theft charge — an Alford plea, in which she maintained her innocence. A Pierce County judge said she owed \$26,000 in restitution in addition to her time incarcerated.

Today, Rhymes is the director of advocacy for the Northwest Community Bail Fund, working to reduce or eliminate court fines and fees like those she was given years ago. But her own debt remains a burden. It's now \$102,588 with interest. The debt is constantly hanging over her head and has prevented her from getting her record expunged, blocking her from getting certain jobs or causing her to lose jobs once her employer finds out.

"I can't move where I want to. I can't live where I want to. I've been stuck in this place I've lived for eight years, and I hate it," Rhymes said. "It just ends up having a ripple effect for the rest of your life."

In Washington, poorer neighborhoods are most impacted by court debt. [Harris and other researchers found](#) that within each county in Washington, low-income neighborhoods carry the most LFO debt per capita. The researchers dubbed these neighborhoods "debtors' blocks." They are more populated by people of color.

While the study didn't examine whether court debts directly cause poverty in these communities, it did find that the two are linked: Neighborhoods with high per capita LFO debt are associated with increased future poverty rates.

"There's something about a relationship between LFOs being sentenced at a high rate and certain communities that lead to the exacerbation of poverty," Harris said.

Rhymes know exactly how that can work. She's resigned herself to the idea that she'll never pay her debt, and the felony conviction will be on her record, decades after the crime occurred and long after her prison sentence.

Rhymes likens courts' efforts to collect these payments to squeezing "blood from a stone." She sees these debts as arbitrary — numbers on a computer that serve to hold people down.

"You can't fund our society on the backs of the poorest people," Rhymes said. "That makes no sense."

### **Reforming the system**

Rep. Tarra Simmons, D-Bremerton, has long made reforming the LFO system her mission. She had her own fines and fees from a prison sentence years ago. Since then, she's become the founding director of Civil Survival, a nonprofit that helps former prisoners engage in advocacy, and in 2021, she became the first formerly incarcerated person to win a state election in Washington.

This year, she sponsored House Bill 1412, which passed and gives judges discretion to waive certain previously imposed court fees if defendants can demonstrate that they don't have the current or "likely future ability to pay."

"I think that the overwhelming majority of my colleagues are starting to see the traps that LFOs put people in," Simmons said. "We are spending dollars to chase dimes."

Simmons and reform advocates are focusing on courts' mandatory fees. Specifically, they want to eliminate the Victim Penalty Assessment and the DNA collection fee — a total of \$600 between them per case. That change was originally part of Simmons' HB 1412 and was taken out at the last minute, but Simmons argues it should be an easy fix. It would cost \$4 million in state funding to replace what counties lose without the Victim Penalty Assessment.

Currently, those funds are typically used by prosecutor's offices to fund victim advocates and work with witnesses to facilitate testimony, said Hannah Woerner, an attorney with Columbia Legal Services, a legal aid group.

"It's a blanket fee that's being assessed on folks who move through the criminal legal system that we're using to pay for necessary services within prosecutor's offices," Woerner said. "But in a way, that serves to perpetuate the injustice within the LFO system."

Still, removing those mandatory fees and making them discretionary brings its own concerns.

“It [would be] progress,” Simmons said. “But I am concerned about justice by geography whenever you give judges discretion.”

That kind of discretion creates uneven distribution of justice across the state, Harris argues. In order to eliminate that, she said the state law on monetary sanctions needs to leave no wiggle room on the criteria judges consider when determining if someone has the ability to pay their court debts. That would mean only considering a defendant’s *current* ability to pay, not their “likely future ability,” as the law says now.

Ultimately, however, advocates for LFO reform question the existence of these fines and fees at all. If courts need more money in the system, it shouldn’t come from those who are already being punished, Harris said. It’s an idea gaining some traction nationally. In 2020, California ended the collection of dozens of court-related fees, [canceling an estimated \\$16 billion in outstanding debt](#).

“We need to figure out our priorities. Are they redemption and re-entering people into society so they can be productive?” Harris asks.

In a way, after having served 27 years in a Washington prison, Nathaniel Sanders is thankful for the harsh sentence he received. He makes no excuses for what happened. In fact, he said the officer whom Sanders shot at back in 1995, when Sanders was struggling with drug addiction, “saved my life,” and got him off the streets.

“I used it as a catalyst for a complete transformation,” Sanders said.

Today, Sanders said he’s involved with his church and as many nonprofit organizations as he can be. He hopes to get a job driving big rigs and building retirement. But when he sees how much his debt has grown since 1995, he’s overwhelmed. If it were just the original \$65,000, that’s one thing. He calls it “insanity” that he’s being asked to pay a quarter million dollars, even after he made payments from prison all these years.

If not for his family, church and community support, Sanders has a guess as to where he might be: back to drugs.

“If I didn’t have that support, and I had something like that hanging over my head, I guarantee you I’d go back into that life. Because there’s no other way to get this off you,” Sanders said. “With something like that hanging over your head, it will never be over.”

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 D.C. man 2<sup>nd</sup> longest jail term Jan 6 riot</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-vb/2022/07/26/ponder-sentencing-jan6-prison/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-vb/2022/07/26/ponder-sentencing-jan6-prison/</a>
GIST	<p>A District man who assaulted three police officers and shattered a riot shield with a pole was sentenced to 63 months in prison Tuesday, matching the longest sentence handed down to a defendant convicted in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack.</p> <p>Mark K. Ponder, 56, admitted to fighting with police in video-recorded confrontations between 2:31 p.m. and 2:48 p.m. that day in the area of the <a href="#">lower west terrace of the Capitol</a>, which was overrun by a violent mob angered by President Donald Trump’s false claims that the 2020 election was stolen. Ponder pleaded guilty April 22 to one count of assaulting an officer using a dangerous weapon.</p> <p>“He was leading the charge,” U.S. District Judge Tanya S. Chutkan said, reciting at sentencing how Ponder smashed a thin pole against an officer’s riot shield so hard that the pole broke and the shield shattered, then found a thicker pole, colored red, white and blue, and resumed fighting.</p>

“He wasn’t defending himself or anybody else. He was attempting to injure those officers, and we are lucky [someone] was not killed with the force Mr. Ponder is swinging those poles,” the judge said.

Chutkan in December handed down a [similar 63-month sentence to Robert S. Palmer](#), 54, of Largo, Fla., who joined the front of the mob and hurled a fire extinguisher, plank and pole at police.

Like Palmer, Ponder was “part of a group who, when they couldn’t get what they wanted, decided they were going to take it. And they were going to take it with violence,” Chutkan said, saying they felt entitled “to attack law enforcement officers who were just doing their jobs.”

Ponder has a right to his political beliefs, the judge said, but in this case he participated with violent extremists in a riot that “exposed — and maybe caused — cracks in our democracy.”

Chutkan has emerged as the toughest sentencing judge in Capitol riot cases and exceeded prosecutors’ request to sentence Ponder to five years in prison, the low end of a federal advisory sentencing range of 57 to 71 months, in keeping with a plea deal.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jocelyn P. Bond said a five-year term was justified by the seriousness of the offense as well as by Ponder’s return to the scene at 4 and 5 p.m. after he was tackled, handcuffed and then told to leave by police because officers needed to reinforce other parts of the Capitol complex.

“Even after the first three assaults, he had a big opportunity to stop and leave the Capitol,” Bond said. “The fact that Mr. Ponder just kept going, even when he had an opportunity to choose a different course, he doesn’t back off, and we think that supports our request.”

Former [U.S. Capitol Police sergeant Aquilino Gonell](#) gave an in-person victim impact statement, telling the court as one of the officers struck by Ponder that there is “no doubt” he understood he was hitting police officers and “had the will and the intent to continue doing harm.”

The former sergeant said that he took early retirement as a result of the attack, that he was left with mental and physical injuries and that “my family has suffered, emotionally and financially.” Gonell told Chutkan that Ponder’s claim that he got “caught up” in the violence “is BS, and please don’t fall for it.”

“He has changed my life,” said Gonell, a 16-year police veteran who served with the U.S. Army in Iraq.

Ponder asked for mercy, saying that while like Palmer he had a criminal history, he was a “changed person for the last 12 years” since his release from prison after convictions for bank and armed robbery.

“I never meant for this to happen. I went there with the intention of going on a peaceful protest,” Ponder said. But he said that he “wasn’t thinking” after he was pepper-sprayed by police, and after the tension and anger in the crowd stoked by the former president erupted into “chaos.”

“I’m not saying I’m completely innocent of this — I am not. I’m extremely sorry for what happened to this officer and all the other officers that day,” Ponder told the judge. “I’m not asking for justice ... I’m asking for mercy.”

Defense attorney Joseph R. Conte added that Ponder, a lifelong resident of the Washington area, overcame a crack cocaine addiction and before Jan. 6 had no contact with police since his incarceration. Ponder was the product of a broken home and suffered abuse as a child “as severe as any I’ve seen in my career,” Conte said, to which Chutkan responded, “I don’t disagree.”

The judge waived any fine and said she would recommend that Ponder be allowed to serve his sentence near Washington, saying she hoped the defendant “will be able to get mental health treatment and counseling and be able to live the rest of his life without getting into trouble with law enforcement.”

HEADLINE	07/26 Ex-Guard member jailed for potential plot
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/07/26/national-guard-attack-police-extremism/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/07/26/national-guard-attack-police-extremism/</a>
GIST	<p>A former National Guard member who admitted in pleading guilty to a weapons charge that he sought out violent extremists and discussed a potential attack on Virginia Beach police was sentenced Monday to four years and nine months in prison.</p> <p>Francis P. Harker, 22, of Norfolk, pleaded guilty to possessing several firearms while he was regularly using LSD and other drugs. He was sentenced Monday based on that offense, but prosecutors said it was “just the tip of the iceberg.”</p> <p>A backpack in Harker’s car trunk contained ingredients for molotov cocktails, prosecutors said, and Harker “admitted to interacting online with members of a group called ‘<a href="#">The Base</a>,’ ” a violent white-supremacist and anti-government group.</p> <p>A magistrate judge found in November that Harker “traveled to Colorado to meet with the leader of a violent extremist group,” but the group is not named in court records.</p> <p>Harker’s public defenders said he was “vulnerable and isolated,” suffering from attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression and drug addiction, and was interested in white supremacism for the shock value and not out of ideological conviction. They had requested a sentence of three years in prison.</p> <p>“His drug use, along with his untreated ADHD, caused Mr. Harker to delve deeper and deeper into a fringe ideology and make increasingly warped decisions, culminating with the choices leading to this prosecution,” his attorneys said in a sentencing brief.</p> <p>Authorities said they found messages and images in which Harker threatened violence, praised Adolf Hitler or disparaged Black people, including one blood-spattered image with the phrase “Rape the Cops.”</p> <p>Harker and another man, who is not named in court documents, vented online in June 2020 about curfews and roadblocks in place because of the coronavirus pandemic, according to documents filed with Harker’s plea.</p> <p>The other man shared a diagram showing how he might trap and kill police officers in Virginia Beach, and said he was about to go “full Dornier,” referring to Christopher Dornier, who killed three law enforcement officers and another victim in California in 2013, according to plea documents.</p> <p>Harker said it would be “manageable” to interrupt an “unjust stop” by police, adding that the other man’s plan looked “good” and that the “fact that vehicles won’t be able to negotiate the terrain is really good,” according to his plea.</p> <p>The FBI searched Harker’s home in November and found a rifle, a Glock and a semiautomatic rifle, along with LSD and other drugs. Prosecutors said Harker bought the semiautomatic rifle on the same day in June 2020 in which he discussed the attack on Virginia Beach police with the online associate.</p> <p>“He engaged in numerous other activities on the Internet involving violent, racially-motivated extremism, particularly focused against law enforcement officers,” prosecutors said of Harker in a sentencing memo. “And while employed in the National Guard, he stole blank COVID-19 vaccination cards and mailed them to associates.”</p> <p>Harker joined the Virginia National Guard in 2018 and was discharged last year because of the case against him, his attorneys said in a court filing.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/26 Atlanta federal prisons corruption, cover up
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/us/politics/atlanta-federal-prisons-corruption.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/us/politics/atlanta-federal-prisons-corruption.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Widespread drug abuse, substandard medical and mental health care, out-of-control violence and horrific sanitary conditions are rampant at a federal prison in Atlanta, a new congressional investigation into the federal Bureau of Prisons has found.</p> <p>The problems plaguing the medium-security prison, which holds around 1,400 people, are so notorious within the federal government that its culture of indifference and mismanagement is derisively known among bureau employees as “the Atlanta way.”</p> <p>But whistle-blowers, including two top prison officials, documented the depth of dysfunction at U.S. Penitentiary Atlanta during a Senate subcommittee hearing on Tuesday, describing dozens of violent episodes — and the systematic effort to downplay and cover up the crisis — over the past few years.</p> <p>“My very first day, I sat in my car and said, ‘What the hell — how does this happen in the U.S. Bureau of Prisons?’” Terri Whitehead, who served as one of the prison’s top administrators until recently, said before members of the Senate’s Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.</p> <p>The conditions at the prison, while extreme, reflect wider problems in the bureau’s sprawling network of 122 facilities housing about 158,000 inmates. The system has suffered from chronic overcrowding, staffing shortages, corruption, sexual violence and a culture that often encourages senior officials to minimize the extent of the problems.</p> <p>This month, Attorney General Merrick B. Garland appointed Colette S. Peters, the longtime director of the Oregon Department of Corrections, to serve as the bureau’s director. Ms. Peters, whose mandate is to clean up the system, begins the job next Tuesday.</p> <p>Mr. Garland’s team has faced criticism about the slow pace of reform, but officials appear to be moving more decisively, especially on one of the most pressing issues — sexual violence against female inmates and staff members in the system.</p> <p>On July 14, the deputy attorney general, Lisa O. Monaco, sent a letter to department officials announcing a task force to establish a policy aimed at “rooting out and preventing sexual misconduct” by prison employees over the next 90 days. Ms. Monaco said she was also instructing frontline prosecutors to make all misconduct cases at facilities a top priority, according to the letter, which was viewed by The New York Times.</p> <p>The problems in Atlanta have been well documented in recent years by <a href="#">The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</a> and local prison reform groups. Over the past nine months, the subcommittee’s staff has dug deeper, obtaining internal incident reports and the testimony of around two dozen current and former employees, including Ms. Whitehead.</p> <p>The witnesses’ assessment has been so bleak that it rivaled jailhouse accounts from earlier centuries. It also largely echoed the bureau’s own internal reports over the past seven years, which have found lax security procedures, deficient management and the intentional disabling of security cameras and equipment used to detect drug smuggling into the prison.</p> <p>Conditions were especially bad in the section of the prison that serves as a holding center for pretrial detainees who have not been convicted of crimes, according to witnesses.</p> <p>Senator Jon Ossoff, Democrat of Georgia and the chairman of the subcommittee, described a near-total breakdown in order “that likely contributed to loss of life, jeopardized the health and safety of inmates and staff, and undermined public safety and civil rights.”</p> <p>Michael Carvajal, the bureau’s departing director, testified voluntarily, but only after being subpoenaed by the subcommittee. He said he took action as quickly as he could, given bureaucratic constraints, replacing the prison’s leadership team and temporarily relocating many inmates during renovations.</p>

Mr. Carvajal, a longtime department official who began his career in 1992 as a guard in Texas, was tapped to run the bureau in February 2020 by Attorney General William P. Barr. He took over just as the coronavirus began [to spread through the nation's prisons](#). As [hundreds of thousands](#) of inmates and correctional officers contracted the virus, Mr. Carvajal's policies drew criticism from lawmakers in both parties.

But the system has long been riddled with problems. In 2019, the House Subcommittee on National Security found that misconduct was [widespread, tolerated and routinely covered up](#) or ignored, including among senior officials. [A permissive environment](#) often made lower-ranking employees susceptible to abuse, including sexual assault and harassment, by prisoners and staff members, according to the report.

Health and safety problems, physical and sexual abuse, corruption and turnover in the top management ranks have also been prevalent. The pandemic only exacerbated staffing issues, resulting in a vast shortage of prison guards and health personnel, The Associated Press reported last year, which described a wide array of other shortcomings.

Pressed on conditions in Atlanta, Mr. Carvajal accepted some responsibility. But he went on to blame the inaction of subordinates and their failure to inform him of the severity of the situation.

"It was obvious there was a breakdown, but it did not reach my level of authority," said Mr. Carvajal, who attributed some of the deficiencies to chronic budget shortfalls.

"I find it hard to believe that you weren't aware of these issues," an angry Mr. Ossoff said.

Mr. Carvajal, who is expected to retire, portrayed himself as an embattled reformer doing his best under punishing circumstances, and rejected Mr. Ossoff's suggestion that women who work or are held in federal prisons were unsafe from sexual violence. He also suggested that many of the worst problems in Atlanta, including unhealthy conditions, were addressed soon after he became aware of them last year.

Mr. Ossoff countered with a January letter from Timothy C. Batten, a federal judge in Georgia, listing 15 current problems. Those include rat and roach infestation, inmates who were losing weight because of the poor quality of the food, harsh solitary confinement rules and an instance in which an inmate on suicide watch was deprived of medication and counseling, and was left for a week "with only a paper jumpsuit and paper blankets."

Current and former employees described the Atlanta penitentiary as among the worst federal facilities in the country, and said its collapse was well known to the bureau's top leaders.

Ms. Whitehead, a veteran federal corrections official who began her career at the Atlanta prison in the 1990s, said she was "shocked and appalled" when she returned there a few years ago to finish her career.

The dining hall, she recalled, was so filthy and run down that the staff was forced to violate security protocols by opening the doors to allow feral cats to hunt rats scurrying around the floors. Later, when officials searched inmates for cellphones, banned because they can be used to order drugs or call in hits on gang rivals, 700 were found, approximately one illegal phone for every two inmates.

Drug use is rampant, and unchallenged by staff members who either turn their backs or sell narcotics to the inmates themselves.

"Inmates are observed in a zombie state, and nothing is done in an effort to determine the source of the illegal substances," Ms. Whitehead added. "The 'Atlanta way' is where staff are not held accountable for misconduct."

	<p>Erika Ramirez, who served as the chief psychologist at the penitentiary from 2018 to 2021, said prisoners were deprived of access to mental health services, allowed to obtain a wide range of illicit drugs and left without basic amenities, like warm clothing and blankets.</p> <p>“I repeatedly reported ongoing, uncorrected gross mismanagement of suicide prevention practices, staff misconduct and general operational deficiencies,” Ms. Ramirez said. “I repeatedly expressed my concerns about other systematic failings to management and nothing was done. Despite desperate need for reform, any suggestion for change was met with resistance.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 OR residents help arrest man starting fires</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/us/oregon-fire-arson.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/26/us/oregon-fire-arson.html</a>
GIST	<p>A man wanted on charges that he started two wildfires in rural Oregon on Monday was spotted walking along a roadway by three local residents who, after a struggle, tied him to a tree until law enforcement officers arrived, the authorities said.</p> <p>The authorities said that a witness saw the man, Trennon Smith, 30, of Veneta, Ore., strolling along a gravel road at about 2 p.m. and igniting two wildfires near the Rogue River Ranch in southwestern Oregon.</p> <p>Firefighters quickly contained and put out the fires, which had burned less than an acre, according to the Curry County Sheriff’s Office. The authorities had a description of the man who set the fires from witnesses, and several agencies searched for him that afternoon. But it was the three Curry County residents who found him by a roadway near the fires, Sheriff John Ward of Curry County said in a <a href="#">statement</a>.</p> <p>“The suspect became very combative with the three residents and had to be tied to a tree to subdue him,” Sheriff Ward said. Mr. Smith was treated by an ambulance crew for injuries that he received from “falling down,” Sheriff Ward said. The suspect was charged with two counts of first-degree arson and one count of reckless burning.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear if Mr. Smith had a lawyer. Sheriff Ward did not immediately respond to an email and call seeking comment on Tuesday night.</p> <p>The fires came at a precarious moment for the state, which, <a href="#">along with the rest of the Pacific Northwest</a>, is facing abnormally high temperatures this week as a heat wave blankets the region. Heat warnings and advisories have been issued for the entire region, where 13 million people will most likely face triple-digit temperatures by the end of the week.</p> <p>Multnomah County, Ore., and the city of Portland <a href="#">issued emergency declarations</a> ahead of the heat wave, and plan to open cooling centers.</p> <p>Since the West coast is less humid than the eastern parts of the country, extremely high temperatures there lead to dangerously dry conditions in forests, said Tony Fracasso, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. A small fire, like the ones that Mr. Smith is accused of starting, could quickly grow and pose a threat, Mr. Fracasso said.</p> <p>Sheriff Ward said that quickly putting out the fires on Monday in Curry County had “most certainly averted a catastrophe and saved lives.”</p> <p>“If the fires had not been contained and if they got out of control,” he added, “they could have blocked all the residents and visitors from having an escape route.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Smuggling migrants: \$1B business</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/us/migrant-smuggling-evolution.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/us/migrant-smuggling-evolution.html</a>
GIST	<p>CARRIZO SPRINGS, Texas — From the street, the little brown house was unremarkable yet pleasant. A bright yellow toy school bus and red truck hung on the hog-wire fence, and the home’s facade featured a large Texas lone star. But in the backyard was a gutted mobile home that a prosecutor later described as a “house of horrors.”</p> <p>It was discovered one day in 2014, when a man called from Maryland to report that his stepfather, Moises Ferrera, a migrant from Honduras, was being held there and tortured by the smugglers who had brought him into the United States. His captors wanted more money, the stepson said, and were pounding Mr. Ferrera’s hands repeatedly with a hammer, vowing to continue until his family sent it.</p> <p>When federal agents and sheriff’s deputies descended on the house, they discovered that Mr. Ferrara was not the sole victim. Smugglers had held hundreds of migrants for ransom there, their investigation found. They had mutilated limbs and raped women.</p> <p>“What transpired there is the subject of science fiction, of a horror movie — and something we simply don’t see in the United States,” the prosecutor, Matthew Watters, told a jury when the accused smugglers went on trial. Organized crime cartels, he said, had “brought this terror across the border.”</p> <p>But if it was one of the first such cases, it was not the last. Migrant smuggling on the U.S. southern border has evolved over the past 10 years from a scattered network of freelance “coyotes” into a multi-billion-dollar international business controlled by organized crime, including some of Mexico’s most violent drug cartels.</p> <p>The deaths of 53 migrants in San Antonio last month who were packed in the back of a suffocating tractor-trailer without air conditioning — the deadliest smuggling incident in the country to date — came as tightened U.S. border restrictions, exacerbated by a pandemic-related public health rule, have encouraged more migrants to turn to smugglers.</p> <p>While migrants have long faced kidnappings and extortion in Mexican border cities, such incidents have been on the rise on the U.S. side, according to federal authorities.</p> <p>More than 5,046 people were arrested and charged with human smuggling last year, up from 2,762 in 2014.</p> <p>Over the past year, federal agents have raided stash houses holding dozens of migrants on nearly a daily basis.</p> <p>Title 42, the public health order introduced by the Trump administration at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, has authorized the immediate expulsion of those caught crossing the border illegally, allowing migrants to cross repeatedly in the hope of eventually succeeding. This has led to a substantial escalation in the number of migrant encounters on the border — 1.7 million in fiscal 2021 — and brisk business for smugglers.</p> <p>In March, agents near El Paso rescued 34 migrants from two cargo containers without ventilation on a single day. The following month, 24 people being held against their will were found in a stash house.</p> <p>Law enforcement agents have engaged in so many high-speed chases of smugglers lately in Uvalde, Texas — there were <a href="#">nearly 50 such “bailouts” in the town between February and May</a> — that some school employees said they failed to take a lockdown order seriously during a mass shooting in May because so many previous lockdowns had been ordered when smugglers raced through the streets.</p> <p>Teófilo Valencia, whose 17- and 19-year-old sons perished in the San Antonio tragedy, said he had taken out a loan against the family home to pay the smugglers \$10,000 for each son’s transport.</p>

Fees typically range from \$4,000, for migrants coming from Latin America, to \$20,000, if they must be moved from Africa, Eastern Europe or Asia, according to Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, an expert on smuggling at George Mason University.

For years, independent coyotes paid cartels a tax to move migrants through territory they controlled along the border, and the criminal syndicates stuck to their traditional line of business, drug smuggling, which was far more profitable.

That began to change around 2019, Patrick Lechleitner, the acting deputy director at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, told Congress last year. The sheer number of people seeking to cross made migrant smuggling an irresistible moneymaker for some cartels, he said.

The enterprises have teams specializing in logistics, transportation, surveillance, stash houses and accounting — all supporting an industry whose revenues have soared to an estimated \$13 billion today from [\\$500 million in 2018](#), according to Homeland Security Investigations, the federal agency that investigates such cases.

Migrants are moved by plane, bus and private vehicles. In some border regions, such as the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, smugglers affix color-coded bands to the wrists of migrants to designate that they belong to them and what services they are receiving.

“They are organizing the merchandise in ways you could never imagine five or 10 years ago,” said Ms. Correa-Cabrera.

Groups of Central American families who crossed the Rio Grande recently into La Joya, Texas, wore blue bracelets with the logo of the Gulf Cartel, a dolphin, and the word “entregas,” or “deliveries” — meaning they intended to surrender to U.S. authorities and seek asylum. Once they had crossed the river, they were no longer the cartel’s business.

Previously, migrants entering Laredo, Texas, waded across the river on their own and faded into the dense, urban landscape. Now, according to interviews with migrants and law enforcement officials, it is impossible to cross without paying a coyote connected to the Cartel del Noreste, a splinter of the Los Zetas syndicate.

Smugglers often enlist teenagers to transport arrivals to stash houses in working-class neighborhoods. After they gather several dozen people, they load the migrants onto trucks parked in Laredo’s vast warehouse district around Killam Industrial Boulevard.

“Drivers are recruited at bars, strip joints, truck stops,” said Timothy Tubbs, who was deputy special agent in charge of Homeland Security Investigations for Laredo until he retired in January.

Rigs hauling migrants blend with the 20,000 trucks that travel daily on the I-35 freeway to and from Laredo, the country’s busiest land port. Border Patrol agents posted at checkpoints inspect only a fraction of all the vehicles to ensure traffic keeps flowing.

The tractor-trailer discovered on June 27 with its tragic cargo had passed through a checkpoint about 30 miles north of Laredo without arousing suspicions. By the time it stopped three hours later on a remote road in San Antonio, most of the 64 people inside had already died.

The driver, Homero Zamorano Jr., one of two men [indicted on Thursday](#) in connection with the tragedy, said that he was unaware that the air-conditioning system had failed.

The 2014 incident at the stash house in Texas resulted in the arrest of the perpetrators and a subsequent trial, providing an unusually vivid look at the brutal tactics of smuggling operations. Though kidnapping and extortion happen with some frequency, such trials with cooperating witnesses are relatively rare,

federal law enforcement officials say. Fearing deportation, undocumented relatives of kidnapped migrants seldom call the authorities.

That case began in the thick brush country eight miles from the Rio Grande, in Carrizo Springs, a popular transit point for people trying to elude detection. “You could hide a million elephants here, this brush is so thick,” said Jerry Martinez, a captain in the Dimmit County Sheriff’s Office.

Mr. Ferrera, 54, the torture victim, first migrated to the United States in 1993, heading to construction sites in Los Angeles and San Francisco, where he made more than 10 times what he earned back in Honduras. He returned home a few years later.

“In those days, you didn’t need a coyote,” he said in an interview from his home in Maryland. “I came and went a couple times.”

When he set out in early 2014, Mr. Ferrera knew that he would have to hire a smuggler to breach the border. In Piedras Negras, Mexico, a man promised to guide him all the way to Houston. Mr. Ferrera’s stepson, Mario Pena, said he wired \$1,500 as payment.

After reaching Texas, Mr. Ferrera and several other migrants were delivered to the trailer in Carrizo Springs.

Before long, Mr. Ferrera’s stepson received a call demanding an additional \$3,500. He said he did not have any more money.

The calls became frequent and menacing, Mr. Pena recalled in an interview; the smugglers let him hear the sound of his stepfather’s shrieks and groans as a hammer came down on his fingers.

Mr. Pena managed to wire \$2,000 via Western Union, he said, but when the captors realized they could not collect the cash because it was a Sunday, they intensified their assaults.

Mr. Pena called 911.

Law enforcement agents found Mr. Ferrera in the trailer “severely, severely physically harmed, with lots of blood all over him, laying on a sofa” in the living room, according to testimony by one of the agents, Jonathan Bonds.

Another migrant, stripped down to his underwear, was squirming in pain, his bludgeoned hand held aloft, in the front bedroom. In the rear bedroom, agents encountered a nude woman, another migrant, who had just been raped by a smuggler who emerged naked from the bathroom.

The house’s owner, Eduardo Rocha Sr., who went by Lalo and was identified as the leader of the smuggling ring, was arrested along with several others, including his son, Eduardo Rocha Jr. The younger Mr. Rocha testified that their cell was affiliated with the Los Zetas cartel and that over two years it had funneled hundreds of migrants into the United States and collected hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The elder Mr. Rocha was sentenced to life in prison. His son and the man who had carried out most of the physical abuse received 15- and 20-year sentences.

Mr. Ferrera testified at their trial. As a victim of a crime who had assisted law enforcement, he was allowed to remain in the United States. But his new life had come with a cost, which he displayed when he held up his right arm for the jury, the fingers now lifeless. “This is how my hand ended up,” he said.

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HEADLINE	07/26 Arrests: 2 open fire during argument
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/two-men-arrested-after-opening-fire-during-argument-at-bremerton-apartment-complex">https://komonews.com/news/local/two-men-arrested-after-opening-fire-during-argument-at-bremerton-apartment-complex</a>



GIST	<p>BREMERTON, Wash. — Police have two people in custody after a shooting at a Bremerton apartment complex.</p> <p>One of the two was actually subdued by witnesses.</p> <p>Bremerton police were called to the apartment at the Schley and Callahan Drive intersection Tuesday around noon for the shooting, which had reported injuries.</p> <p>Officers were on the way when they were told one suspect was tackled by the bystanders.</p> <p>BPD said it soon got to the scene and found out there were two suspects. The crime scene had several spent shell casings and bullet holes on one apartment building, but no one was injured.</p> <p>Bystanders then told police the suspect they tackled fired a weapon at one victim, the gun was found and the suspect identified as Joseph Paul Claussen, 19.</p> <p>Claussen had also hit another person with the gun, cutting them. The other suspect is 21-year-old Pierre Fransque Taylor, who police say they found nearby.</p> <p>Taylor was also seen with a gun before the shots rang out, he needed medical attention for minor injuries but it's unsure how he was hurt.</p> <p>Claussen was taken to jail for attempted murder in the second degree, assault and unlawful possession of a firearm and was given a \$500,000 bail.</p> <p>Taylor was booked for two separate assault charges and has a \$20,000 bail.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Activists 'fight back' by deflating SUV tires</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/as-politicians-dither-on-climate-activists-fight-back-by-deflating-suvs/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/as-politicians-dither-on-climate-activists-fight-back-by-deflating-suvs/</a>
GIST	<p>Bloomberg - You walk out of your house on a sunny weekend morning, eager to drive your gasoline-powered sport-utility vehicle to the local beach. You're about to turn on the engine and hit the road, when you notice a flyer stuck underneath the windshield wiper.</p> <p>"We have deflated one or more of your tires," it reads. "You'll be angry, but don't take it personally. It's not you, it's your car..."</p> <p>That's the message from an anonymous collective called Tyre Extinguishers.</p> <p>Since March, the group has deflated the tires of nearly 6,500 SUVs in Austria, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Sweden, the U.K. and the U.S. Their goal? Drawing attention to gas-guzzling vehicles' impact on climate change and air pollution. If SUVs were an individual country, they would have ranked sixth in the world for emissions last year, accounting for more than 900 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.</p> <p>"We are aiming to grow this movement to the point where it becomes impossible to own an SUV in the world's urban areas," said a spokesperson for Tyre Extinguishers. "A relatively small number of people can make this happen."</p> <p>Tyre Extinguishers isn't alone. As politicians dither on climate policy that matches what the science demands, some citizens are going beyond peaceful protests to make themselves heard. In July, activists with the group Just Stop Oil glued themselves to frames of paintings in art galleries in the U.K., and breached the track on the first lap of the Formula One British Grand Prix. Also in July, the French group</p>

Derniere Renovation interrupted the Tour de France cycling race. Last year, the group Insulate Britain disrupted traffic across cities and highways in the U.K.

These activist outfits are all building on tactics popularized by Extinction Rebellion (XR), which was founded in the U.K. in 2018 and now acts as an umbrella organization for a variety of global groups. In July, members of the group Doctors for XR broke glass at the London office of finance giant JP Morgan Chase. In April, activists of Scientist Rebellion chained themselves to the doors of JP Morgan Chase's office in Los Angeles.

The vast majority of climate protests remain peaceful. This past weekend, activists from Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil and Insulate Britain marched to the U.K. parliament without causing any property damage. But while most political leaders condemn XR's more aggressive antics, some say they can be effective at moving the politics. Zac Goldsmith, a member of the U.K.'s House of Lords and minister for the Pacific and international environment, told the BBC last week that what these activists do "may be annoying, but it works."

That's also the conclusion Andreas Malm, an associate professor of human ecology at Lund University, comes to in his 2021 book *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*. He briefly reviews the history of massive social changes and concludes that peaceful protests alone rarely succeed at the task.

The Haitian Revolution — hardly a bloodless affair... Militancy was at the core of suffragette identity ... Subaltern violence marked the route to [independent] India, from the mutiny in 1857 to that of 1946... The U.S. civil rights movement won the Act of 1964 because it had a radical flank that made it appear as a lesser evil in the eyes of state power.

Indeed, although Tyre Extinguishers are a new collective, there have been previous reincarnations dating back to 2007. In Sweden, a group called the "Indians of the Concrete Jungle," which counted Malm as a member, has deflated 1,500 SUVs. "The ruling classes really will not be talked into action," Malm writes in *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*. "The movement must learn to disrupt business-as-usual."

Malm's message to other climate activists could not be clearer: "Damage and destroy new CO<sub>2</sub>-emitting devices. Put them out of commission, pick them apart, demolish them, burn them, blow them up. Let the capitalists who keep on investing in the fire know that their properties will be trashed."

This thinking is not mainstream for protesters. In fact, he dedicates nearly a third of his book to addressing climate activists who are strict adherents to peaceful protests — an approach backed by some research. One 2018 study found that, when protesters with strong public support for their views turn violent, people may perceive them to be vandals. In other words, the use of violence risks losing allies on climate causes.

For those taking the less-trodden path, however, the goal is to attract attention explicitly because reasonable actions to address the crisis have failed. If you're not already being affected by climate change — heat waves causing roads to melt, rail lines to buckle and flights to be canceled; floods taking down bridges and crops; hurricanes blowing away buildings and disrupting oil production — these new-age activists want to make sure you cannot ignore the crisis.

The takeaway for both participants in and recipients of this style of reproach is about personal agency. And if you're looking for a way to fight back, Tyre Extinguishers' spokesperson says, "we are giving [people] an action they can take."

Could climate justice be achieved any other way, such as peaceful protest or legislation? "We have to try everything," the spokesperson says. "However, it's clear that the climate movement needs to embrace sabotage in a big way. The pollution is not stopping. Emissions are still going up. We're marching towards death." Still, the group does not have a good answer when asked about deflating tires that might be needed for a medical emergency, or how targeting SUVs can impact those with disabilities (as happened in California).

	<p>Tyre Extinguishers say they currently have 50 groups worldwide, to whom they provide “inspiration” on their website in the form of images to identify SUVs, a video on how to deflate tires and the “It’s your car” leaflet in 10 languages. The group’s ultimate aim is “to see bans on SUVs in urban areas, pollution levies to tax SUVs out of existence, and massive investment in free, comprehensive public transport,” it says. “But until politicians make this a reality, Tyre Extinguishers action will continue.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/16 Walmart shooting: 2<sup>nd</sup> juvenile in custody</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/second-juvenile-in-custody-after-walmart-shooting-in-mount-vernon-injuries-5/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/second-juvenile-in-custody-after-walmart-shooting-in-mount-vernon-injuries-5/</a>
GIST	<p>MOUNT VERNON, Wash. (AP) — A 16-year-old Mount Vernon boy has turned himself in to law enforcement for his involvement in the July 17 gang-related shooting at Walmart in Mount Vernon that left five injured.</p> <p>Police booked the boy into Skagit County Juvenile Detention, according to a news release from the Mount Vernon Police Department, the Skagit Valley Herald reported.</p> <p>The boy will be held on a 30-day magistrate’s warrant to provide investigators time to reconstruct the events of the shooting through witness accounts, physical evidence, scene reconstruction, video footage, tips from the public and more, according to the news release.</p> <p>Mount Vernon Police Chief Chris Cammock addressed gang activity in Mount Vernon and Skagit County in the release.</p> <p>“There are individuals who choose gang subculture for their lifestyle; however they are far outnumbered by people who won’t tolerate it,” he said.</p> <p>Three of those injured in the shooting — two 19-year-olds and a 24-year-old — were airlifted to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. Two have been discharged from the hospital.</p> <p>One of the 19-year-olds remains in serious condition and is receiving treatment in Harborview’s intensive care unit, according to Barbara Clements, communications manager for UW Medicine.</p> <p>On Friday, police made the first arrest in relation to the shooting. The juvenile male was booked into Skagit County Juvenile Detention.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Gang concerns grow in Tacoma</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/a-bunch-of-babies-out-here-killing-each-other-gang-concerns-grow-in-tacoma">https://www.q13fox.com/news/a-bunch-of-babies-out-here-killing-each-other-gang-concerns-grow-in-tacoma</a>
GIST	<p><b>TACOMA, Wash.</b> - Following violence, there is a growing concern for gangs in the <a href="#">City of Tacoma</a>.</p> <p>On July 6, a 14-year-old girl <a href="#">died</a> in a shooting, officials would later call gang-related.</p> <p>Everyone involved in the shooting is a kid, and officials said the girl who died was not gang affiliated.</p> <p>In early 2021, the City of Tacoma disbanded its gang unit due to a lack of resources. Currently, the department is down to more than 40 officers. It is unclear if or when the gang unit may return.</p> <p><a href="#">The Spotlight</a> spoke to gang expert, Gabe Morales, about what he says is a turf war between rival gangs, and even factions of the same gang in Tacoma.</p> <p>"You'll have an upstart set that will break off, often they're rejected from joining one particular set. they'll start their own gang. And now they're in a position where they have to save face, so they're actually going to put in work, and commit crimes against the gang that disrespected them," said Morales.</p>

For people living in the city, they say they are concerned about what the rest of the summer will bring.

"I feel like there is a lot of hopeless people who feel there is no solution to what is going on right now," said Bunchy Carter.

Carter is the minister of defense for the Black Panther Party.

Carter says the Black Panthers are trying to get rival gang leaders to sit down together in an effort to stop the violence.

However, he says more needs to happen to stop kids from getting into gangs in the first place.

"Sixteen, fifteen, fourteen, thirteen-year-old kids riding around in cars with their bandanas in their pockets, whichever side it's on, and they got guns, and they got masks on, and they got all of these other things, and I'm like how did you even get that. Because the people who are supposed to be your leaders aren't doing their job. There's no way a 13-year-old should be riding around the city with a gun looking to shoot anybody," said Carter.

Despite not having a specific gang task force, Tacoma Police say they investigate all violent crimes.

Tacoma Police are also a part of a multi-department operation called the South Sound Gang Task Force. The task force is made up of different agencies including Pierce County Sheriff, Lakewood Police, The Department of Corrections, and the FBI.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Sheriffs blame lawmakers for crime spike</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/sheriffs-blame-wa-lawmakers-for-increase-in-crime-loss-of-officers-statewide">https://www.q13fox.com/news/sheriffs-blame-wa-lawmakers-for-increase-in-crime-loss-of-officers-statewide</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - Two prominent sheriffs in <a href="#">Washington</a> blame state lawmakers for the <a href="#">increase in crime</a> and the dwindling number of police officers to handle it.</p> <p>Last week, the <a href="#">Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs</a> (WASPC) released its annual report on crime in 2021. It showed more than a 12% increase in violent crime accompanied by a 4.4% decrease in the number officers statewide in 2021 compared to the year before.</p> <p>"This the highest numbers of murders recorded since we began collecting this data in 1980," said WASPC Executive Director Steve Strachan.</p> <p>He said factors contributing to the rise in crime include the pandemic, officers leaving for other jobs, and the failure of state lawmakers to fix a State Supreme Court ruling known as the <a href="#">Blake Decision</a>, which theoretically ended drug possession arrests.</p> <p>"There was a 60.9% drop in drug offenses and 73.6% fewer arrests related to drug use," said Strachan.</p> <p>Now, the Whatcom and Spokane County sheriffs are blaming the Democrat-controlled State House, Senate and Governor Inslee, accusing them of letting crime grow.</p> <p>"As a result, they have decreased the safety of the community statewide, and it is time they be held accountable," said Ozzie Knezovich, the Republican sheriff of conservative-leaning <a href="#">Spokane County</a>.</p> <p>He joined Bill Elfo, the sheriff of more liberal-leaning <a href="#">Whatcom County</a> on a Zoom press conference, calling on voters to think twice about who they vote for in the Aug. 2 primary.</p> <p>All state House and Senate seats are part of the primary election, with the top two candidates moving on to the November general election.</p>

	<p>The sheriffs want voters statewide to reflect on the choices state lawmakers made in 2022 and 2021 to make it harder, they say, for officers to catch the bad guys.</p> <p>"See what irresponsible legislation has done and [voters] demand that the situation be reversed," said Elfo.</p> <p>They claim legislation passed over the last two years have deterred officers from detaining suspects for question, curtailed vehicle pursuits and a behind-the-scenes lack of support for officers are reasons why the crime rates have increased. All are elements of bill the legislation passed and the governor signed.</p> <p>"The protests, defunding the police, this has had a deterrent effect on encouraging people that we need to get into law enforcement," Elfo said.</p> <p>Last week, playing on a political wind shift, Governor Inslee state his position a little late, that he does not support the defunding the police—a movement that started two years earlier.</p> <p>"This 'Defund the Police' movement; I don't agree with it," he said at a press conference on Wednesday. "I don't think it's the right approach, we need to have an approach that will give us an adequate degree of well-trained, accountable police officers, and we are going to do that in Washington State."</p> <p>"It's time to communicate and look at who we are putting in the Legislature, because these people do not seem to be concerned about your safety, or the safety of the officers that serve you," said Knezovich.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 King Co. cracks down on distracted drivers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/tech/distracted-driving-crackdown-underway-across-king-county">https://komonews.com/news/tech/distracted-driving-crackdown-underway-across-king-county</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Drivers in Western Washington are likely to notice more law enforcement officers on the road during their morning and evening commutes.</p> <p>From Federal Way to Bellevue, agencies throughout King County have beefed up patrols to catch distracted drivers.</p> <p>"(We) really strongly encourage people to put those devices away," said Bellevue Police Department Maj. David Sanabria. "Don't drive distracted."</p> <p>Law enforcement agencies in King County said they have added additional officers on the road to look for offenders running afoul of Washington state's E-DUI law, which prohibits drivers from holding cell phones or watching videos while driving. The law also applies to motorists even if they are stopped in traffic or at a traffic signal.</p> <p>"It's very similar to a driver who's operating a vehicle while impaired," Sanabria said. "Their reaction times are slower and they're not able to react quickly to driving conditions."</p> <p>Local law enforcement agencies say they are on the lookout for drivers concentrating on their mobile devices instead of the road ahead.</p> <p>Bellevue police is one of the agencies putting extra officers on the road for these targeted patrols.</p> <p>"When we say high visibility enforcement, what we mean is we really take those officers and we put them in areas where we know there's a potential problem or has been a problem for us in the past," Sanabria said. "And their only task and only mission for that time period is to make as many contacts as they can during that period."</p> <p>Sanabria says calls for service for other offenses won't be impacted.</p> <p>The extra officers on the road are working overtime for the emphasis patrols.</p>

	<p>Last year, Bellevue police wrote 1,600 tickets for distracted driving, Sanabria said.</p> <p>This year, Sanabria said the department is trending slightly up, having already issued citations to about 1,000 drivers.</p> <p>A recent survey of 900 King County drivers found that 93 percent of motorists viewed it a threat when other drivers text or email while driving. More than 80 percent reported they were unlikely to use a hand-held device to talk, text or use non-GPS apps while driving. The high visibility enforcement is part of the King County Target Zero Task Force.</p> <p>"Our target, our goal, is to have zero deaths, zero casualties by 2030," Sanabria said. "That's the goal."</p> <p>A reminder, if you get caught breaking the E-DUI law, it will cost you \$136 for the first violation. If you get a second ticket within five years, the fine increases to \$234. The extra patrols last until Aug. 6.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Tacoma: 1 injured, 40-bullets shot at home</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/woman-injured-after-dozens-shots-fired-tacoma-home/P5DJAMSM6FD6PNNEPTPXH7N7JI/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/woman-injured-after-dozens-shots-fired-tacoma-home/P5DJAMSM6FD6PNNEPTPXH7N7JI/</a>
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — Tacoma police are investigating after someone shot bullets into a Tacoma home more than 40 times late Saturday night.</p> <p>“My partner looked at me and said ‘no, no, no. those are not fireworks. Those are gunshots,’” says Katrina A., who lives nearby.</p> <p>The shooting happened in the 1700 block of S. 36 St. One of the bullets hit a 44-year-old woman inside the house. She was taken to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.</p> <p>It’s not the first time the neighborhood has heard dozens of shots ring out.</p> <p>“I’ve lived here for 15 years,” says Jackie Hartle. “Really it’s been a pretty quiet neighborhood up until probably the last six months. We’ve had the SWAT team out here twice in the last month. And then of course the other night was the shooting.”</p> <p>Some neighbors tell KIRO 7 they believe the recent shootings are gang-related.</p> <p>“What I don’t think is being addressed is there’s a serious gang problem here,” Jennifer tells KIRO 7. “It’s uneasy knowing that there’s gang members in our nice little neighborhood.”</p> <p>Sgt. Darren Moss with the Pierce County Sheriff’s Office says there has been a rise in gang activity in the county. Some shootings have indicators of being gang-related.</p> <p>“Why is a house being targeted with that many rounds? Where multiple people are shooting up a house? We only see that in drug activity and gang activity,” says Sgt. Moss, but adds, “It doesn’t mean that the person who got shot is a drug dealer or gang member. But that might be the reasoning why they picked that house, because they think they are.”</p> <p>Tacoma police have not confirmed the motive behind Saturday’s shooting, or if it was related to a local gang.</p> <p>“The Tacoma Police Department investigates all crimes of violence, regardless of the motivation behind the crime,” says Tacoma police officer Wendy Haddow.</p>



	<p>In May, only a few blocks from Saturday’s shooting, was another incident that neighbors point to as gang activity. It involved a shootout between two cars that left bullet holes in nearby cars and homes and sent one man to the hospital. A police report shows one of the suspects in that incident was a member of the Hilltop Crips. Neighbors remain on edge.</p> <p>“It’s getting to the point where even I’m a little more nervous being around here,” says Hartle about the recent crime. “I have a 13-year-old daughter and I’m getting nervous about letting her wander around.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Retailers, Olympia PD crackdown on thefts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/olympia-police-retail-theft-bust/281-2f2ee4b7-df84-4876-9f62-8c01f46b70e2">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/olympia-police-retail-theft-bust/281-2f2ee4b7-df84-4876-9f62-8c01f46b70e2</a>
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — Thieves trying to rip off The Home Depot store in East Olympia have had a surprise this spring and summer: police waiting for them in the parking lot.</p> <p>On several occasions since May, Olympia police officers have worked with plain-clothes store employees to identify and arrest potential thieves.</p> <p>Within one hour in June, three people were either cited for theft or trespassing, accused of planning to steal items.</p> <p>Officers said one woman removed the anti-theft device off a saw she took out of the store.</p> <p>“She said she was intending to steal those items to pay for her daughter’s graduation trip,” said Officer Jacob Theis.</p> <p>Theis said he was surprised how many people were either cited or arrested.</p> <p><a href="#">Organized retail theft</a> is a growing problem in Washington.</p> <p>The Home Depot went to Olympia police asking for help combatting organized retail theft, which is blamed for \$2.7 billion in losses statewide in 2021.</p> <p>Olympia police have also helped Rite-Aid with anti-theft operations.</p> <p>“Shopping spree without the payments,” said Sgt. Paul Frailey, who heads up the department’s community policing program.</p> <p>He said the city is happy to help businesses go after thieves.</p> <p>One woman arrested Monday was accused of driving a stolen car that was full of items believed to have been taken from a Thurston County Lowe’s.</p> <p>“Sometimes it’s just a couple of dollars of items,” said Frailey, “Sometimes there’s something else at play.”</p> <p>This summer, Washington state announced the first Organized Retail Crimes Taskforce that will focus on sophisticated, organized crime rings and work to stop them. The task force met for the first time in early July.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 Renton: 1 dead, 6 injured, 100 shell casings</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/renton/investigating-renton-shooting/281-89800c98-139f-4fd5-b7f4-f475e99f5650">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/renton/investigating-renton-shooting/281-89800c98-139f-4fd5-b7f4-f475e99f5650</a>

GIST	<p>RENTON, Wash. — Four handguns, multiple magazines and approximately 100 shell casings were recovered outside a rental venue following a shooting in downtown <a href="#">Renton over the weekend</a>.</p> <p>No arrests have been made in the shooting that left a 32-year-old Tacoma man dead and six others wounded on Saturday.</p> <p>Renton Police say around 1 a.m. on Saturday, they received multiple 911 calls reporting shots fired near Logan Avenue South and Second Street, outside of a musician's hall where an event was being held.</p> <p>"Arriving units actually heard gunfire going on when they arrived," Renton Police Detective Robert Onishi said. "The suspects were all gone, there were a number of gunshot victims here. They treated some on scene; some self-transported to area hospitals."</p> <p>While first responders tried to treat the injured Tacoma man, "officers and fire personnel also had to deal with a large, agitated crowd," according to Renton police. The man was moved to a more secure location but later died.</p> <p>Renton police called for other agencies to assist. Officers from Tukwila, Kent, Auburn, Des Moines, Federal Way, the King County Sheriff's Office and Washington State Patrol helped secure the scene.</p> <p>The other six who were injured are expected to recover, though some remain hospitalized.</p> <p>Onishi said they believe the shooting is linked to a dispute.</p> <p>Renton Police ask anyone with information on the case to contact Scott Barfield at 425-430-7534 and reference case No. 22-7518.</p> <p>The shooting in Renton comes less than a month after eight people were shot in south <a href="#">Tacoma outside a private venue</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/25 Seattle Center: 6 women sexually harassed
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/women-being-sexually-harassed-assaulted-near-seattle-center/281-23da68b7-c52c-4847-8fbd-088f174bdaaf">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/women-being-sexually-harassed-assaulted-near-seattle-center/281-23da68b7-c52c-4847-8fbd-088f174bdaaf</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Six women have told KING 5 News they were either assaulted or sexually harassed by a man near Seattle Center. On social media, even more women say this happened to them. The women believe it's the same man.</p> <p>"I also have a kitchen knife until I get my switchblade," said a Belltown woman who asked not to be identified, and was the latest victim of a man exposing and touching himself while following her.</p> <p>It happened Sunday at 2 p.m. during Pokémon Go Fest. She later went to the security kiosk on Seattle Center grounds.</p> <p>"There were children around, so I didn't want them to do that to someone's child or to snatch someone's child," she said.</p> <p>She was able to get away because her neighbor came to help.</p> <p>"He ran away, but not before exposing himself and masturbating in front of her," said Monika March, who believes she was approached by that same man days prior.</p> <p>March said the man threw trash at her, was yelling obscenities and followed her. March said she was able to get away by running to another security kiosk on Seattle Center grounds.</p>

"It's the long-term effects, right? Because, yes, it was that one incident, but it's impacted my daily life and I'm afraid to go outside," said March.

KING 5 reached out to Seattle Center. In an email they said they have one official report on their campus and there was no need for an interview. However, three additional women told KING 5 they made reports with Seattle Center security guards.

"The utmost importance is your safety and if you don't have that then what's the point being locked up in your apartment," said Megan Tucci, who is thinking about moving to a different city after she said she was followed Wednesday morning on Fifth Avenue by a man who exposed himself and lunged at her.

Tucci was able to get a picture of the man.

All six women KING 5 talked to believe it's the same man.

"Next step is we're going to put posters around the neighborhood," said Tucci.

When asked if Seattle police are doing enough to find this man, both Tucci and March said no.

"I know they deal with so much crime and maybe this isn't a big deal to them but this is still a crime and needs to be dealt with," said Tucci.

For now, the women are sharing their stories. They plan to put up posters and are choosing not to walk alone.

"I'm scared and my neighbor and I even coordinated walking our dogs together so that we're not alone. It's terrifying to know he's still on the loose," said March.

The Seattle Police Department told KING 5 they are investigating reports of harassment in the area, but they don't know at this time if it's the same man.

Police were out with one of the fliers looking for him on Monday.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/25 RCMP: Vancouver rampage kills 2, injures 2</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Gunman-slain-after-rampage-kills-2-hurts-2-near-17328727.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Gunman-slain-after-rampage-kills-2-hurts-2-near-17328727.php</a>
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — The shaken residents of a Vancouver suburb are recovering from a gunman's hours-long overnight rampage that killed two people and wounded two more before he was shot to death by police.</p> <p>Authorities initially had said it appeared the attacker was targeting homeless people before dawn Monday, but later said the motive was under investigation. Shootings were reported at a homeless center but also at other sites.</p> <p>Evidence of the blitz was scattered around Langley, including an overturned bicycle spilling personal possessions onto a street and a shopping cart with someone's belongings.</p> <p>Officials said a woman was critically wounded in the first shooting, at midnight at a casino. A man was shot to death at 3 a.m. at a residential complex that provides support for people transitioning out of homelessness. At 5 a.m., the third shooting killed a second man at a bus stop. Then another man was shot in the leg near a highway bypass at 5:45 a.m.</p> <p>The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said an emergency response team confronted the gunman far from the fourth attack. Officers fatally shot him, said Ghalib Bhayani, an RCMP superintendent.</p> <p>Police identified the suspect as Jordan Daniel Goggin, 28, of Surrey, British Columbia.</p>

Authorities said they were working to determine the motive behind the attack. It was not known if the shooter and his victims were acquainted, Bhayani said.

He told reporters that the suspect's death would be subject to an investigation by the Independent Investigations Office of British Columbia, a civilian-led police oversight agency.

The shootings roiled Langley, a town of 29,000 people about 30 miles (48 kilometers) southeast of Vancouver. The town features a variety of shops and restaurants and almost 350 acres (142 hectares) of parks. Many residents moved there for its less expensive housing and commute to Vancouver, the largest city in the province of British Columbia.

Most of the shootings were in downtown Langley. One was in neighboring Langley Township.

After the shooting began, ambulances and police vehicles converged at a mall. The area was cordoned off with yellow police tape and a major intersection was closed. A black tent was set up over one of the crime scenes.

An unmarked police SUV at one of the shooting scenes, near a bus depot, had at least seven bullet holes in the windshield and one through the driver's window.

Mass shootings are less common in Canada than in the United States. The deadliest gun rampage in Canadian history happened in 2020 when a man disguised as a police officer shot people in their homes and set fires across the province of Nova Scotia, killing 22 people.

The country had overhauled its gun-control laws after an attacker killed 14 women and himself in 1989 at Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique college.

It is now illegal to possess an unregistered handgun or any kind of rapid-fire weapon in Canada. To purchase a weapon, the country also requires training, a personal risk assessment, two references, spousal notification and criminal record checks.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Top-10 most common stolen vehicles WA</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article263812653.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article263812653.html</a>
GIST	<p>Is your car more likely to be stolen than others?</p> <p>Vehicle thefts in the United States increased by 8% in 2021 compared to 2020, but not all cars have the same risk as others.</p> <p>As many think that only older cars can be stolen, some 2020 car models are among the most commonly stolen vehicles.</p> <p>A recent report from the National Insurance Crime Bureau found which car makes and models are most commonly stolen across the country and in Washington state. Older cars are popular with thieves as their parts can have more value, and they are easier to steal, but newer vehicles are also often stolen. Newer vehicles can be more difficult to steal because of newer alarm and anti-theft systems, but when they are stolen they can be easily resold or even shipped overseas according to a press release from the NW Insurance Council.</p> <p>In Washington state, the top 10 most commonly stolen cars include vehicle years ranging from 1997 to 2001:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ 1999 Ford Pick-Up (full size).</li><li>▪ 1998 Honda Civic.</li><li>▪ 1997 Honda Accord.</li><li>▪ 1999 Chevrolet Pick-Up (full size).</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2000 Honda CR-V.</li> <li>▪ 1999 Toyota Camry.</li> <li>▪ 1998 Subaru Legacy.</li> <li>▪ 2001 Dodge Pick-Up (full size).</li> <li>▪ 1999 Toyota Corolla.</li> <li>▪ 1998 Ford Pick-Up (small size).</li> </ul> <p>According to the study, these are the cars that were most commonly stolen in the United States in 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2004 Chevrolet Pick-Up (Full Size).</li> <li>▪ 2006 Ford Pick-Up (Full Size).</li> <li>▪ 2000 Honda Civic.</li> <li>▪ 1997 Honda Accord.</li> <li>▪ 2007 Toyota Camry.</li> <li>▪ 2005 GMC Pick-Up (Full Size).</li> <li>▪ 2020 Nissan Altima.</li> <li>▪ 2000 Honda CR-V.</li> <li>▪ 2018 Jeep Cherokee/Grand Cherokee.</li> <li>▪ 2020 Toyota Corolla.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Mexico City police seize 1.6tons of cocaine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-city-police-find-16-tons-cocaine-trucks-87456954">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-city-police-find-16-tons-cocaine-trucks-87456954</a>
GIST	<p>Mexico City police made one of the biggest drug busts in recent memory in the capital, stopping two freight trucks carrying about 1.6 tons of cocaine, officials said Tuesday.</p> <p>City police chief Omar Garcia Harfuch said the cocaine was worth about \$20 million on the street in <a href="#">Mexico</a>. But he said only part of the shipment had been destined for the capital, with the rest heading north to Los Angeles.</p> <p>The cocaine apparently was sent to Mexico from Colombia and landed at a port on the Pacific coast of the southern state of Oaxaca, the chief said.</p> <p>He said a third vehicle was escorting the two trucks, and four Colombians were arrested.</p> <p>Mexico City officials have long acknowledged that drug cartels use the capital as a shipping point, but they claim the gangs do not operate in the city as brazenly as they do in other parts of Mexico.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/26 Community: suspend all Uvalde city cops</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/community-urges-uvalde-council-suspend-city-cops-reported/story?id=87457151">https://abcnews.go.com/US/community-urges-uvalde-council-suspend-city-cops-reported/story?id=87457151</a>
GIST	<p>Family members of Uvalde school district students have called on the city council to suspend all city police officers who were on the scene during the May 24 <a href="#">massacre at Robb Elementary School</a>.</p> <p>During a council meeting Tuesday night, victims' families and community members said they wanted all officers who responded that day to be held responsible for the bungled police response that left 19 students and two teachers dead.</p> <p>Brett Cross, father of Uziyah Garcia, who was killed in the massacre, pointed to a police officer in the audience, saying he was a responding officer to Robb. "That ain't right... until the investigation is done, they should be on administrative leave," he said.</p> <p>Diana Olvedo-Karau echoed the sentiment, asking for "administrative leave, at a minimum" and suggested putting the officers on desk duty as an alternative until the investigation concludes. "I don't think that's a lot to ask," she said.</p>

Already, the lieutenant who was acting chief during the massacre, Lt. Mariano Pargas, has been suspended pending the outcome of an internal investigation into the police department's response. A special state investigation found that the police response was delayed 77 minutes and plagued with failures.

The school district police chief, Pete Arredondo, [has been suspended without pay](#) while the school district proceeds with plans to terminate him.

Each responding police officer from the city's force would be individually interviewed as part of a review, council members said. The city force has 39 officers; 24 or 25 of them responded to the emergency calls at Robb Elementary School.

Council members also spent a considerable amount of time criticizing the school board for promising Arredondo's termination before he was given "due process." Council members explained that their investigation would be slower and more methodical in order to avoid mistakes. They also reminded the crowd that city officials had already suspended Pargas, who was acting chief on May 24 because the department's chief was on vacation.

During the session, council members also passed a resolution urging Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas state Legislature to hold a special legislative session to consider raising the minimum age to purchase semi-automatic assault-style rifles from 18 to 21. The gunman at Robb elementary had just turned 18.

The vote on the resolution follows repeated calls from other city and state officials to hold a special session on gun control in the wake of the Robb Elementary School massacre.

On Monday, the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District unanimously passed a resolution urging Abbott to hold a special session to raise the minimum age to legally own an assault weapon from 18 to 21. The Uvalde County commissioners passed a similar resolution earlier this month.

More than a dozen Texas mayors last month [called on](#) state leaders to "take immediate action to prevent the next mass shooting in Texas," including raising the age to purchase assault weapons in the state to 21.

Texas Senate Democrats have also called on Abbott to hold a special session this summer to enact gun control measures like raising the age to legally own an assault weapon to 21.

The Texas House of Representatives' [committee report](#) on the shooting, released last week, revealed the accused school shooter showed many warning signs prior to the school shooting but was still able to legally purchase the assault rifle used to kill 19 students and two teachers.

In Texas, where there are few restrictions on purchasing firearms, individuals who are 18 years or older are legally permitted to purchase long guns, which include shotguns and rifles.

The Texas Legislature is scheduled to reconvene for its next session in January. Abbott is the only person with the authority to call lawmakers back for a special session before then.

In New York, Gov. Kathy Hochul [signed a gun reform bill](#) banning anyone under the age of 21 from buying or possessing a semi-automatic rifle after an 18-year-old allegedly used one to kill 10 people at a supermarket in Buffalo.

After a then-19-year-old used an AR-15 rifle to kill 17 students and faculty members in the [2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School](#) in Parkland, Florida, the state quickly raised the age for buying any firearm, including long guns, from 18 to 21.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/uvalde-school-district-suspends-robb-elementary-school-principal/story?id=87400644">https://abcnews.go.com/US/uvalde-school-district-suspends-robb-elementary-school-principal/story?id=87400644</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Mandy Gutierrez</a>, principal of Robb Elementary School in Texas, was suspended with pay Monday, her attorney, Ricardo Cedillo, confirmed to ABC News.</p> <p>A special legislative investigation into the <a href="#">May 24 massacre at the school</a> found that Gutierrez was aware of security problems prior to a shooter accessing the school -- killing 19 students and two teachers -- but she had not had the problems fixed.</p> <p>District officials declined to discuss the suspension or what it means.</p> <p>Gutierrez joins school district police chief Pete Arredondo, still on unpaid administrative leave. The Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District has recommended Arredondo be fired.</p> <p>The chief has been singled out for a series of catastrophic failures in leading the police response to the massacre that ignored the possibility that children and teachers could be saved had the teenage gunman been confronted and neutralized, as standard police protocol dictates.</p> <p>News about Gutierrez's suspension began circulating just before a regularly scheduled school board meeting Monday night. During the session, the board announced that the 2022-23 school year would start on Sept. 6 as the district puts in place a series of security improvements and arrangements for emotional and social support services.</p> <p>Before officials announced their plans, the board was again greeted by family members of victims of the shooting, as well as other community residents disturbed with the way the district's leaders have acted since May 24.</p> <p>"These parents are still hurting. And they want answers," Daniel Myers, a pastor, told the board.</p> <p>Brett Cross, father of Uziyah Garcia, who was killed in the massacre, pointed to board members, saying only one of those present had reached out to his family. He demanded someone on the board take responsibility for failures that allowed the shooting to occur in the first place and how the district has handled the aftermath.</p> <p>"You care more about your damn selves than you do for our children," Cross told the board. "Why have y'all still not taken accountability for y'all's mess-ups? Can any one of y'all look me dead in the eyes and say, 'Look, we messed up?'"</p> <p>Finally, board member Luis Fernandez confessed that "everybody messed up."</p> <p>"So, let's recap: Two months later... nothing has changed," Belinda Arreola told the board. "We are once again banging our heads against a brick wall, demanding answers and accountability... Getting nowhere because it's always something."</p> <p>"I feel that no amount of security will ease our hearts and our minds," Tracy Byrd said, pointing to the significant loss of life, despite heavy law enforcement response. The board did not respond.</p> <p>Among the security improvements announced were that Wi-Fi and communications problems identified by investigators would be the subject of an audit starting Tuesday. Officials are also now conducting a search for an interim district police chief, and the district police force will be reorganized. Other improvements announced were that new video camera systems have arrived and are being installed this week, and vestibules and school access points are being reviewed by consultants and limited.</p> <p>The district's Raptor security system is being reworked so emergency alerts are clearer for users. The district has also asked for 30 to 40 state troopers to be on hand to assist on the first day of school.</p>

	Among social and emotional support announced were that there will be five more licensed counselors, one per campus, as well as telemedicine to include psychiatric and counseling services via the UT Health System. It was also announced that the district will use the Rhithm app, a morning assessment to ask students how they're doing and feeling, and that parent support will be available via the Bereavement Center, to include individual support available to anyone in the community in need.
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